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TLS

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Guardians of rationality

Edward Parkes

PETER SCOTT
The Crisis of the University
277pp. Croom Helm. £16.95 (paperback, £3.95).
07099 33037

The Crisis of the University is a book which everyone seriously interested in higher education must read, although the title is a misnomer. Peter Scott's canvas encompasses the whole of higher education - it would be very difficult to write anything useful about the universities except in this wider context - but he also relates the problems and opportunities of higher education to those of society as a whole. Indeed Scott often seems to align himself with Abraham Flexner's view that the university "is not outside, but inside the general social fabric of a given era". One of Scott's propositions is that "both modern society and higher education are struggling in ways that are incestuously linked and with equally indifferent success to establish a meta-language that is more than technical and administrative and which can impose a moral structure on their exploding experiences". This is the real "crisis of the university" with which the book is concerned. The current problems of the financing of, and access to, higher education, while they form part of the historical development of the late twentieth-century university, are rightly regarded as relatively unimportant.

The Crisis of the University is divided into three parts. In the first Scott examines the development of the university and, in particular, attempts to relate the administrative and intellectual aspects of higher education to a common framework. The second part of the book is concerned with a more detailed study of the effects of expansion, of the role of the polytechnics and colleges, and of the possible development of a post-bloary strategy. In his third part, he tries to pull together various strands from the first two parts in speculating about the future both of higher education and of modern society.

The opening chapter is entitled "Goodbye to Robbins", but it is not at all clear at the end of it to what it is we are to say goodbye. Certainly what Scott refers to several times as "the Robbins expansion" is at an end, but to associate the two decades of massive expansion of the British university system (from 1955 to 1975) with the name of Lord Robbins has always seemed to me a tenuous linkage: the expansion was well under way and all but one of the new universities decided upon, before Robbins's report was published.

In structural terms, the most important results of the Robbins report were the transfer of the former Colleges of Advanced Technology to the university sector, and the creation of the Council for National Academic Awards. Scott gives a very good appraisal in later chapters of the effects of CNAA both in breaking the universities' monopoly in the awarding of degrees and in quickening interest in questions of standards and validation, but he dismisses too perfunctorily the significance of the accretion of the ex-CATs to the UGC grant list.

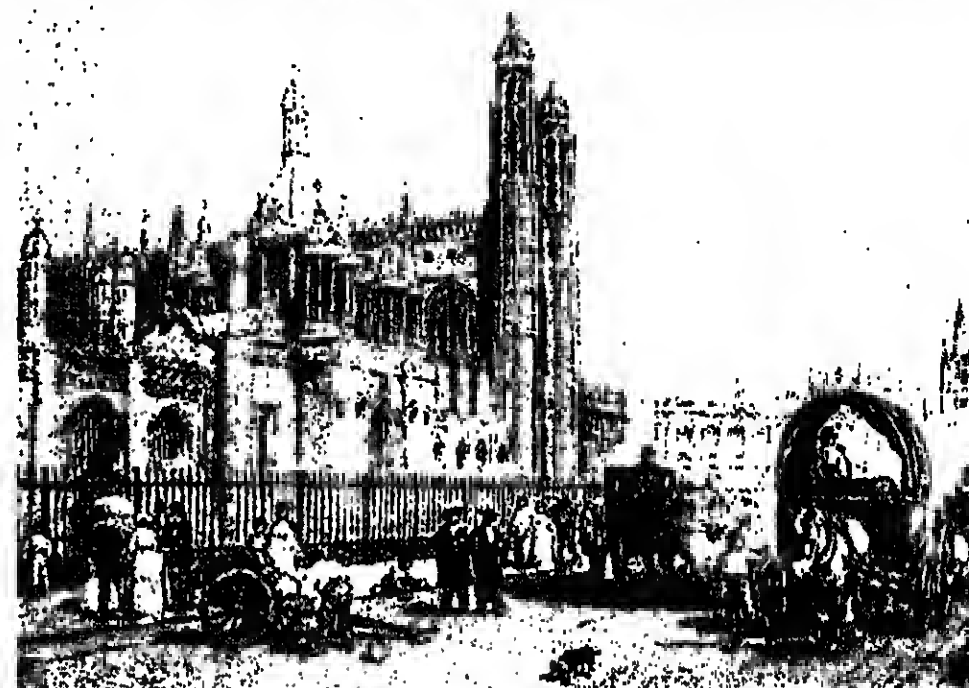
The CATs not only produced an instant increase in size of the university sector, but they greatly increased its diversity in approaches to teaching (particularly through sandwich courses) and scholarship. They brought with them, or developed subsequently, distinguished departments in non-technological areas (for example, languages) unlike those to be found elsewhere in the university system. It is true that some of the engineering departments in the ex-CATs were behind the times in 1964 and slipped further behind with the succeeding years, so that when the UGC supported modern technology in the early 1980s it did so to places like Edinburgh and Southampton (and Bath and Loughborough) rather than giving an automatic priority to institutions which had once included the word "Technology" in their name. Nevertheless, the incorporation of the ex-CATs was a very important and beneficial change in the nature of the university system. Not only does Scott pass too hastily over this, but he fails entirely to recognize the

servants and their local authority counterparts. They were the flagships of local authority higher education and the favoured children of the DES, which eventually took over the funding. When Robbins's proposal that the CATs should be transferred to the UGC was accepted, the DES and the local authorities felt, with some justification, that they had been robbed. This sense of outrage produced an anti-university ethos within the DES (now diminishing as the members most concerned retire), fuelled by grief about the CATs and worries that their successors, the Polytechnics, might go the same way.

We are certainly not saying goodbye to these structural effects of the Robbins report (even the demise of CNAA would not imply a reversion to past practice), so what about its other aspects? The most commonly quoted part of the report is its statement on access: "all young persons qualified by ability and attainment to pursue a full-time course in higher education

At times, indeed, Scott seems to associate the "liberal" and "modern" universities with Snow's two cultures. He writes of the leading humanities as cultural, integrative disciplines, concerned with knowledge-as-process, and the scientific disciplines as concerned with intelligence but not sensibility, and leading to knowledge-as-product. Finally, and not surprisingly, "the education and training of engineers and technologists were marginal and badly incorporated activities within the liberal university", "universities were reduced to acting as the service agents of the profession which retained a surprisingly detailed control over the education... received".

Except in the last instance, which is nonsense, Scott's position is in some ways unassailable. If one points to the narrow historian, unwilling to consider anything outside his "period", he is presumably a modernist, and the engineer concerned to integrate for his purposes an understanding of economic history,



"A View of King's College, Cambridge, from King's Parade", a watercolour by Birket Foster, reproduced lithographically in *Some Places of Note in England, 1888*; one of 111 plates in Jan Reynolds's Birket Foster (224pp, Batsford, £30.0 7134 3754 5) to be published on September 6 and reviewed in a future issue of the *TLS*.

should have the opportunity to do so". It is at present more difficult to get into a university than it has been for many years past, but higher education as a whole is still very accessible to that group with which Robbins was concerned. The other major theme of the report was the liberalization of higher education - more general first degrees, greater diversity of post-graduate study, and so on - and here Scott argues that, far from being over, Robbins is just about to begin. Having at least partly met the quantitative needs of higher education, we can devote more attention to the qualitative needs. Perhaps the first chapter needs re-titling "Welcome to Robbins". In fact, some of the most interesting developments in higher education in the next twenty years may lie outside Robbins's remit, since he was confined to full-time higher education.

Scott moves next to the development of the liberal university and its successor, the modern university, associated, one too accurately (as Scott points out) with their housebold gods, Cardinal Newman and Clark Kerr. He begins with an excellent discussion of the separation of intellectual and political authority, which made both the liberal university and the scientific tradition possible. It is when he turns to the distinctions between the liberal university and the modern university, which has in part replaced and in part overlaid it, that some of his arguments need questioning. To Scott "the liberal university was a pluralist intellectual institution but not a fissionary institution like the modern university; it felt the need for disciplines that struggled to integrate and incorporate knowledge rather than simply to advance knowledge on a narrow front"; and again, "this, therefore, is the key difference between the liberal and modern university; not that the former has an essentially cultural definition of knowledge which was suppressed in the latter by a superior scientific definition, but that the

sociology, law, statistics and rock mechanics is presumably a liberal. But definitions of institutions which depend upon a head count of the habits of individuals do not seem particularly useful, and definitions which depend upon inaccurate stereotypes of those individuals less useful still.

Where Scott is on much firmer, and in many ways more interesting ground is in his discussion of the relation between teaching and research, although his statement that "the near-unanimous enthusiasm for keeping teaching and research in close association is a traditional view rather than a contemporary need" would be questioned by many dons.

The first part of the book ends with an examination of the evidence for a crisis in the universities. Scott presents us with a very wide-ranging, complex which will repay careful study. He offers four superstructural reasons for pessimism within which the direct and structural factors such as reductions in public expenditure have to be set. The first is the submergence of cognitive by affective and political values; the second is the development within the universities of post-materialist values which are at variance with the values of lay society and which carry some threat to academicism; the third is that as higher education has become more widely available, it has inevitably become less precious, economically, socially and culturally; and the fourth, and vaguest, but perhaps most influential, is the spirit of the age: since the early 1970s, low growth and lower morale in Britain have led to investment being crowded out by consumption, and higher education, which is an investment good, has suffered accordingly. Scott adds to the structural and superstructural factors a final set of trends which he regards as more important than either in the shift to pessimism: changes in intellectual value, and in particular a growing tension between academic

post-war development of the universities, and the ways in which A. H. Halsey's "donnish dominion" has come under pressure. Scott writes:

The position of the UOC is particularly revealing. Much of the recent criticism of its priorities in sharing out the reduced university grant has been myopically misplaced. Far from being an alien agency imposing alien priorities, the Committee seems to reflect all too accurately the values of the universities themselves. If it is reformed or even abolished, it will not be because it has interfered insensitively with the autonomy of the universities, but because it is a bulwark of the "donnish dominion" that lay society has come increasingly to distrust.

My own view is that the UGC is a more subtle instrument than Scott's words might imply, and that it has tried to re-establish lay confidence in the "donnish dominion", although not of course in its pre-war, or even nineteenth-century, form. We are a long way from the days when Disraeli could write of the need for someone to arise and lead the public mind from (note the order) Parliament, the Universities or the Press.

Scott's study of the universities is followed by a particularly valuable chapter on "The Polytechnic Alternative". He believes that the binary policy has failed administratively while succeeding normatively. According to Scott, the binary policy has always existed and probably always will exist, and the question is not whether a binary line should be drawn, but where. He also makes the valid point that the binary policy is a policy for all higher education, not something aimed at the public sector, and that the first fruit of the policy as adumbrated by Mr Crosland was a decision not to establish any more universities.

Scott ends this second part of his book by presenting five flaws in the operation of binary policy which he believes require the replacement of the present binary structure. His first flaw is the existence of two separate halves of a higher education policy which are not co-ordinated in any satisfactory way. Here I think he does less than justice to the rapidly growing NABUGC union. His second flaw is that the universities have been exempt from the democratization of diversity, relevance, comprehensiveness, social control, accountability, social justice and social mobility. This seems to me to present too clear-cut an image of a picture which is inherently blurred. The universities have not been exempt from these pressures, nor has the public sector responded wholeheartedly to them, although the balance is as Scott describes it. Scott's third flaw is the concentration of advanced courses to the Polytechnics, thus sharpening the distinction between higher and further education. The fourth flaw is one which I have difficulty in viewing as a flaw - rather I would regard it as a virtue - but Scott is worried by the increasing heterogeneity of the public sector caused, in particular, by the diversification of the former colleges of education. The fifth and final flaw is that the division between university and non-university teachers may be merely one of quality and not one of function.

Scott sees the need for a "Post-Binary Structure" which will eliminate some of these flaws and simultaneously serve as a moralizing metaphor which will help to set a direction and a goal for higher education. The organizing principles around which higher education must regroup are seen by him as planned diversity, efficiency, accountability and academic pedagogical freedom.

His solution is a much extended "university" sector, including the present universities, polytechnics, Scottish central institutions, and some of the larger colleges, making in all about a hundred major institutions which would be styled "universities", and would each be dependent on mixed funding from both local and central government sources. Beneath the "university" sector a community college sector would be encouraged to coalesce, whose members would have four broad functions: as transfer institutions offering the first two years of conventional higher education; and as outreach institutions trying to meet the educational needs of the whole adult community. Both sectors would be the responsibility of a Tertiary Education Commission on the Australian pattern, with the universities and polytechnics

John Coates

Attlee's new order

Paul Addison

HENRY PELLING
The Labour Governments, 1945-51
 313pp. Macmillan. £25.
 0333 363566

continuing education agency and an accreditation and validation agency developed from CNA but having responsibilities throughout the system. I suspect that these ideas may be greeted with modified rapture by some of those who actually work in higher education.

The third part of Scott's book contains two chapters. The first, on "Future Issues", takes some of the ideas of the first two parts of the book a little further. In a section on "input" we learn that the colleges are to evolve "low intensity styles of . . . higher education for the common man". In discussing output Scott argues for a complete separation of teaching and research funding. But when it comes to prospects for the 1990s he proves a reluctant tipster. He describes to us the view that the (curable) disease of the modern university is overload of functions; and the alternative view, that higher education is so embedded in the processes of modern society that its trajectory is determined by socio-economic trends external to itself; but at the end of a long and interesting exploration he concludes simply that the future is uncertain.

His final chapter is a basically pessimistic appraisal of British higher education and of British society. Scott suggests that the mood of Britain has moved beyond pessimism, or even negativism, towards an increasing rejection of reality. He cites the Falklands episode as revealing how degenerate the public conscience has become. The prospect he describes is of an unravelling of the political, intellectual and moral fabric of our society. To resist this he sees a need for reindustrialization and renormalization, processes in which higher education is particularly influential. The first is difficult: the existence of the second, which he regards as the more urgent, is barely glimpsed. In Scott's view, only by accepting all of the "binary" objectives—pluralism, comprehensiveness, relevance, accountability and social justice—can higher education hope to protect the present precarious place of rationality in social life, and make any contribution to a new moral structure. He ends by saying that the prospects do not appear good.

As far as its content is concerned, *The Crisis of the University* is an extremely important book. Scott has many interesting and profound things to say: he offers penetrating analyses and controversial conclusions. It is when one comes to the style and to some extent the development of themes that I am less happy.

On page 29 he quotes from Macaulay's scathing review of Edward Nares's history of William Cecil. "Dr Nares", wrote Macaulay, "is a man of great industry and research; but he is so utterly incompetent to arrange the materials which he has collected that he might as well have left them in their original repositories." To apply this criticism in so stark a form to Scott's own book would be quite unjust, but there is sufficient familiarity in Macaulay's phrase by the time one reaches page 29, and even more by the time one reaches page 271, to make the reader uncomfortable.

This is very disappointing to those of us who admire Scott's articles in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*—taste, coherent, well argued and full of interest and good sense—and his redoubtable skills as an editor. How can such an excellent journalist and editor be such an indifferent author? There would seem to be two answers, which reinforce one another. Freed from the discipline of expressing his ideas in the limited number of words which will fit on the back page of the *THES*, Scott becomes discursive and repetitive. There is the further point that at least parts of the book originated as speech, and the redundancies of argument which are proper and necessary in the spoken word seem to have been inadequately pruned on transference to the printed page.

However, indigestible as it may be for continuous reading, *The Crisis of the University* is a major contribution to the literature of higher education, and it will repay frequent browsing. With its final pessimism I do not agree, perhaps because I use a different time scale from the author. I am attracted to a word which, as far as I recall, has no place in Scott's work. That word is "curiosity". Curiosity got us out of the trees, and curiosity, about both intellectual and moral questions, will in the longer term set us free from the ills about which Peter Scott is so rightly concerned.

Henry Pelling is a distinguished scholar and the author of standard histories of the Labour Party and the trade unions. The Attlee governments are a legendary and problematical subject: a hot potato of labour history. The prospect of Pelling on 1945 must therefore raise hopes of a work of revision as stimulating as his most controversial book, *Popular Politics and Late Victorian Society*. Alas, his latest work is a descriptive chronicle of ministerial and electoral politics with many asides but few ideas.

Having set the scene with a review of Labour's electoral fortunes up to 1945, Pelling continues with thematic chapters on topics such as nationalization, the welfare state, and Bevin's foreign policy, rounding off with the general elections of 1950 and 1951. To judge from the Preface the aim is to review the ministerial record with the aid of the most important source materials released in recent years. But if so, there are notable gaps in the proceedings. Economic crises appear from time to time as tricky decisions for the Cabinet. But there is no connected treatment of the management of the economy under Dalton, Cripps or Gaitskell. A table demonstrates that nationalization drew more than 2 million employees into the public sector, an important point. But the omnipresence of the state in the private sector is never discussed. The export drive, regional policy, the retreat from controls and the advance of Keynesianism, inflation, incomes restraint, the framework of relations between government, industry and the unions—these are topics glimpsed briefly if at all. The explanation would seem to be that the book is actually a selection of essays on major aspects of the Attlee regime, and ought perhaps to have been presented as such.

In form the book is a cross between a general survey and a research monograph. With topics as large as nationalization or the welfare state compressed into a chapter of twenty pages or so, original findings tend to get elbowed into a corner by the weight of more familiar detail. Nor have the archives yielded great revelations. But there are fresh twists. Pelling claims that the boldest stroke in the setting up of the NHS, the nationalization of the voluntary hospitals, was attributable not to the radical vision

of Aneurin Bevan, but to the prompting of a civil servant, John Hawton. This may or may not be correct, for according to Michael Foot's biography, Hawton's memorandum on the subject was itself composed on the oral instructions of Bevan.

Still in the field of social policy, the complaint of Hugh Dalton at the Treasury against "those wretched Old People . . . our most troublesome Pressure Group", is worthy of note. So is a disquisition by Pelling on the history of the phrase "welfare state". This was first used in Britain by Alfred Zimmermann, to distinguish between the democratic (or "welfare") and totalitarian (or "power") states. But after the war it acquired a pejorative meaning in the US as a term of censure on the Truman administration, and Conservative politicians tried to give it a similar thrust in Britain. But the polemic boomeranged and Labour proudly inscribed the phrase on its banners. A surprise in another direction is Ernest Bevin's proposal in January 1949 to dissolve the Commonwealth. This was inspired by the difficulty of reconciling India's republican constitution with the status of the crown. Patrick Gordon Walker resolved the dilemma by devising the phrase, "Head of the Commonwealth".

So much for titbits. Pelling's most substantial innovation is a chapter on Marshall Aid. It was an irony that semi-socialist Britain was kept afloat after 1947 by donations of nearly \$3,000 million from the United States. The suspicion must arise that transatlantic pressures were among the factors restraining Labour's drive to socialize industry. Pelling finds no hard evidence for this, but does highlight the efforts of US officials to employ Marshall Aid as a lever for urging Britain into a united Europe. The British put up a successful resistance, clinging to the illusion of great power status and the "special relationship". The impact of the Anglo-American alliance on Britain will surely give rise to a torrent of historiography in years to come.

While all contributions to knowledge must be gratefully received, the book as a whole is a disappointment. Much of Pelling's work has been devoted to proving that the history of the labour movement, indeed the history of Britain, is less exciting than his readers might have imagined. The message is implicit in an unvarying prose style that flattens the landscape and muffles the impact of change. Take the chapter on Labour and Empire. Other historians might strive to convey the dramatic overtones of the withdrawal from India: the loss of a symbol of grandeur, the horror of the com-

munal massacres that followed. Pelling recounts the facts in the same tone of voice he would employ in recounting a Cabinet reshuffle. The groundnuts scheme, a planning fiasco that he and ran till it beggared all description, is described in such muted terms as to drain it of most of its scandalous force.

The biggest disappointment is the narrow framework of interpretation. Apart from his discussion of electoral swings, Pelling confines himself to the top level of parliamentary and Cabinet decisions. No reader would guess from this account that the Attlee government was swept into power on a decisive wave of social and intellectual change accelerated by the war. Pelling suggests five specific factors that produced Labour's victory, and these are far enough as far as they go: the "swing of the pendulum", the importance of housing, and so on. But these are all secondary phenomena. The social dynamics that gave rise to all the factors, the primary causes of change, are never identified. The underlying truth was that the war gave power to an ambitious but intelligent and a newly demanding working class. The intelligentsia worked with great success to establish collectivism as the conventional wisdom for all thinking people. The working class meanwhile exploited the bargaining power arising from a prolonged period in which demand for labour exceeded the supply. It was the alliance of forces that accounted for such factors as the "swing of the pendulum" and the importance of housing. Here was the momentum behind the massive legislative programme of the Attlee government.

By and large, the intelligentsia and the working classes got what they wanted from post-war politics: state intervention and social security. The changes did not add up to socialism. But they did create large vested interests due to the heart of the economy. In this respect, the Attlee government dictated the main lines of social development right down to the 1990s. Now these same vested interests have become the latest of the many scapegoats for British economic ills. In Thatcherite ideology, organized labour and the liberal intelligentsia are the main obstacles to economic growth. So as many as you can, bully the rest into submission, and fatten your seat-belts for take-off. It's as simple as that, and just as cracked as it sounds. For of course it isn't a rational creed: it's the battle-cry of all those who resent the social balance created since the war, and are now determined to reverse it. Every week the papers bring out more and more clearly the true significance of Attlee's new order.

compromises involved in them. Almost anything that is achieved runs the risk of "reinforcing capitalism". Co-operatives, though fashionable, merely "reproduce the worst features of small businesses", and even "popular planning", that darling of the GLC Employment Committee, is fraught with the danger that "the energies of extra-parliamentary organizations will become policy oriented and divorced from their base struggles".

But despite ideological differences on these finer points, a common historical analysis unites the authors. It goes something like this: the Left, having ignored local government as a field of activity in the 1950s and 1960s, some time in the late 1970s realized its possibilities; in the words of Peter Saunders they came to "identify local government as a significant arena in which to organise resistance to the Conservative government, to develop and try out new socialist initiatives, and to wage a propaganda battle for the hearts and minds of the working class". They succeeded in gaining power in a number of urban authorities and used it in particular for developing new initiatives involving women, blacks and socialist employment policies, appointing "politically committed officers" to disavow the obstructionism of the professional local bureaucracies. According to this view, Labour's pre-1981 contribution to local government is by definition worse than useless—part of the "bankrupt social democratic consensus", but by contrast Labour governments of the future, if they can

example of these radical torch-bearers.

Strong on ideology, and on the "demands" of the client groups that the Left claims to have made on local government itself. There are no worked-out ideas for the reform of the system, and financing, no contribution whatsoever on better ways of providing its chief service—education. Even the chapter on "Decentralization" concentrates more on the possibilities of this reform for electoral manipulation than on its potential for improving the quality of local council tenants. Will it indeed "develop a local awareness among more people than struggles . . . over cuts and services and a non-anti-capitalist struggle"? That, Left, is the key question.

One part of the book worth reading is the final interview with David Blunkett, fiery, shrewd—he is the one of this new generation of Labour politicians to watch.

The Annual Register: A record of world events 1983, edited by H. V. Hodson (543pp. £40. 0 582 50324 8); the 225th volume in this series, contains summaries of the year's events in over 140 countries. The sections on the United Kingdom deal in detail with the employment of civil servants, crime and punishment, and parliamentary life, and the sections on foreign and Commonwealth affairs, the law, Wales and Northern Ireland. There are also chapters on the sciences, the law, and sport and a section on the

The anarchy on stage

Richard Findlater

MARGOT PETERS
Mrs Pat: The life of Mrs Patrick Campbell
 514pp. Bodley Head. £15.
 0370 305671

The theatrical heyday of Stella Cornwallis-West—always remembered as Mrs Patrick Campbell—was relatively brief: after her overnight success in 1893 as Paula Tanqueray, she depended upon a handful of major roles (none in Shakespeare) and a wider range of unscripted performances on and off the stage. It was a stormy controversial career: although many people acclaimed her as the English Bernhardt or Duse, others dismissed her as little more than a glamorous amateur. Her reign over the stage virtually ended seventy years ago after her portrayal of Eliza Doolittle in the first *Pigmalion*, when she was thirty-nine. Thence she went downhill, accelerated by her zest for self-destruction. If there seemed to be no proper place for this spell-binder in the theatre between the wars, it was partly because she had wrecked so many plays, ruined so many chances, made so many enemies, on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet Mrs Pat left her mark on theatrical history; and forty years after her death she remains a fascinating phenomenon, whose charm radiates this massive, scholarly, perceptive and often very entertaining biography.

Margot Peters has skillfully marshalled a mass of previously unpublished material from conversations, interviews and correspondence, in addition to combing through the printed evidence about Mrs Pat's life and work, following many confused trails and shadowy clues in her effort to understand the perversities of a woman who was indisputably a great actress, whatever her rating as an actress. The main new source of information about Mrs Pat's life (which was romanticized and trivialized in her own autobiography of 1922) is a cache of some

250 letters unearthed ten years ago in the dustbin of a London hotel, now identified as the Tanner Collection and in Dr Peters's possession. They include a number of intimate early letters from Stella to her devoted sister Lulo: an intimacy which ended after Lulo's devotion transferred to her female lover. As a result of this and other discoveries Dr Peters gives a much more complete and revealing picture of Mrs Pat than Alan Dent could supply in his 1961 biography: about her parents and relations, including her hapless first husband, her amorous relationships with George R. Sims, Forbes-Robertson and GBS; her persistent failures as a mother (lap-dogs ranked far higher in her affections than daughters and daughters-in-law); her financial and managerial vagaries; and her zealous cultivation of aristocratic connections which often eclipsed her responsibilities to the theatre. Dr Peters traces the graph of Mrs Pat's work as an actress with scrupulous sensitivity and care, showing the idolatry, the dismay and even the hatred that she inspired. This biography ought to be the last word on Stella Campbell, although some mysteries still, inevitably, linger.

"I have always felt the stage would be the end", Stella wrote to her sister Lulo, soon after the birth of her second child. More precisely, it seemed the only available means to an end: money. Mr Patrick Campbell was despairingly incapable of supporting his wife and family, but she had a number of obvious assets which helped her to find work on the professional stage. She was endowed with an Italianate beauty—black hair, pale face, huge dark eyes—and a magnetic presence. "Almost painfully" thin in her first stage decade, she had an aristocratic authority, uncommon physical grace and a burning sexuality. She had a very sharp wit, a keen intelligence, what Shaw described as "a cunning eye for surface effects", and a self-dramatizing personality with an irrepressible sense of the ridiculous. She had courage, imagination and generosity. What she did not have from the start, it seems, was a rooted

sense of vocation as an artist: she never took the theatre really seriously. She played with it, as the whim took her. Sir John Gielgud ranks her as a great artist, but he has said that "she only acted to please herself, with no sense of responsibility towards an audience or her fellow actors" (or, all too often, the author).

As Dr Peters's book makes clear, Mrs Pat's acting was often wildly uneven, not only from one night to the next, but from one act to another. She found direction, and competition, intolerable. She had little stamina. She was capricious to the point of cruelty. She would change her lines to throw a young actress off balance; she would keep up a running *soito voce* commentary on the audience while her leading man was talking; she would turn her back on the audience for an entire scene, or walk off in the middle for a glass of water or a sharp word in the wings. On one notorious night as Ophelia, when Irving and Ellen Terry were in front, she played half the role in her own hair (for which she'd been criticized) and half in a flaxen wig. As Lady Teazle in *The School for Scandal*, irritated by the elderly stars playing Sir Peter and Joseph, she shouted from behind the screen, "Oh do get on, you old ponies." Dr Peters tells us, adding, maddening stories of plays that should have run, plays she needed to run, that she deliberately sabotaged by her on-stage and off-stage behaviour. At times she seemed to delight in her reputation for being increasingly impossible to work with, and her notorious talent for alienating friends and insulting possible allies. As Alexander Woolcott said of her "unwavering and ingenious" rudeness in Hollywood, in her mid-sixties, "Her failure to be politic took on the proportions of a magnificent gesture. She was like a sinking ship firing on the rescuers."

In spite of all that, however, Mrs Pat won homage in succeeding generations. Barrie, Beerbohm, Yeats, Gilbert Murray were among her first admirers. Shaw fell in love with her, and said that she inspired Hesione

Hushabye, the Serpent, Eliza and Orinthis. One significant early success was her 1895 Juliet: she told her sister Lulo that she left out most of the "sweets" applied to Romeo, as well as cutting the "Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds" speech, because "I DREADED being a sentimental Juliet". Yet this performance (while it failed to seduce William Archer or Clement Scott) entranced such scholarly, unimpressible critics as A. B. Walkley: "a more delicious embodiment of Juliet I do not hope to see", he wrote, explaining uncharacteristically that the theatre had been turned into "a very temple of love". Visually, Mrs Pat knew what to do: in spite of her low, captivating voice she was less sure about language. (She found it very hard to use Lady Macbeth's: "I shouldn't say such things.") Some of her most memorable sorcery was in silence.

Long after Mrs Pat's prime, her siren power survived in fits and starts. To Ralph Richardson, who saw her in 1924 as Hedda Gabler, she seemed the greatest performer he had ever seen, and he kept her thereafter in his private pantheon. Cecil Beaton, watching her about the same time, noted that although she seemed "twice as large as any man on the stage", she was still "a great actress with a compelling command". John Gielgud, who worked with her in *Ghosts* in 1928, has said "it was a joy to see her move and hear her speak"; when she felt like it, she "showed what great acting could be". In the same year, after seeing her as Ella Rentheim, James Agate ranked her as one of the six great actresses he had seen (he was then fifty-one), with Bernhardt, Réjane, Duse, Midge Kendal and Ellen Terry.

Yet in finishing Mrs Pat's story, as told by Dr Peters and her many witnesses, one cannot smother a feeling of profound and persistent waste; especially when one looks back to an early letter in the Tanner Collection, in the year of Stella's London debut (1890). "Oh if only I could know the value of myself", she wrote to her sister. "Lulo, if I set to work with all my might, will I ever be good?"

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John Co 1316

Domestic discontinuities

Jon Silkin

ASA BENVENISTE
Throw Out the Life Line Lay Out the Corne:
Poems 1965-1985
142pp. Anvil. £4.50.
0856460982
CARMÍ
At the Stone of Losses
Translated by Grace Schulman
110pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £4.
0 85635 563 5
MICHAEL AKILLIAN
The Eating of Names
43pp. Ashod Press, PO Box 11147, Madison
Square Station, New York, NY 10159.
0 935102 132
HAIG KHATCHADOURIAN
Shadows of Time
57pp. Ashod Press.
0935102124

Asa Benveniste's *Poems 1965-1985* have, he claims, "a basis in domestic experience, though it may be hard to believe". Almost impossible, I should say. Domestic experience, by implication, is mostly continuous. Fragmentariness, when it occurs, is measured and evaluated within a conception of wholeness and continuity. Imagism, in its preoccupation with the image and its discreteness, and its opposition to discursiveness, sanctioned the elusive intensity of assembled fragments. Much of Benveniste's poetry is rooted in this. Up to but excluding the "Linnaeus" poems, his poetry works on the assumption that continuity is less valuable than the energy released by disjunction. A reader may believe he has moved the joints together and created a synapse, only to discover he cannot supply continuity or completeness. If one adds to this the difficulty of, for instance, particular knowledge which is not self-explanatory in the poem, the reader is probably in trouble. Thus in what Benveniste sees as his "long poem" "The Alchemical Cupboard" (though it occupies in fact less than five pages) problems occur:

Not only to diminish
justice which marked
the figure to hear
this noise as we do
by the motion of this law.

Near the poem's close, when one might expect some resolution, it is not clear what that "justice" is and what the "figure it marked". It is equally unclear what the "noise" is, what the "law". To question need not be unkind. One responds - as one is able - to the almost objectivist spare language, language which operates in a special lyric mode; and one admires the wit, as much as one responds to the surreal narrative:

I take the pistol up to my mouth
and pull the trigger
music starts up again in the mirror
which, by the way, ends in lyric resolution:
"green eyes brown nipples I blow air through
your thigh and bare bones" ("Domestic Poem").

Better still are a number of the "Tabellae Linnaei", where the reference is to the eighteenth-century Swedish botanist whose system of classifying plants remains the basis of modern practice. Benveniste's is an art not of sequence but of collocation; but in a number of these lean though not abrasive pieces, nature, love and poetry combine to produce more accessible because more "continuous" poems. Thus "The Linnaeus Letters" is more accessible, and so is "For the Last Time", "First Pull" and "Linné on Öland", where Benveniste's claim that "the poems have a basis in domestic experience" seems more credible. In "First Pull" we read of "books and all this Linnaean paraphernalia"; a wit that glances wryly at nature with mirth. The poem concludes: "Oh shape me before it is too late and I learn to live with your colours". Is this the desire to be shaped by nature through one's sensuous responses, or to be "shaped" by that mode of perceiving nature of which Linnaeus, and his classifying, is an instance; the mode of naming and of making distinctions - a mode not too distant from poetry? This ambiguity is, at any rate, more satisfying, more felt, than the difficulties of "The Alchemical Cupboard". And the fine ending of "Linné on Öland" ("describe

wholeness composed of mutually circumscribing activities:

how much there is of need
as giving me such runic
approximations to joy within
the spiky circle of my pen . . .

Grace Schulman has translated Carmi's verse from the Hebrew. One appreciates how much poetry in translation loses the grain and obstinacy of the original, but one senses, also, that Carmi's original has little of what David Jones called "this Haecceity", the "thisness" of perception which language in its turn recreates. Little of the strength of modern Hebrew poets such as the late Uri Zvi Greenberg and Amir Gilboa inheres in Carmi. Gilboa's work is poetry; Carmi's is an appealing kind of verse. Carmi's prose version, from his edition of *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*, of Immanuel Frances's epitaph "For a Wife" may make this distinction clearer: "I have set this stone as a weight, not as a memorial, over my wife's grave, lest (God forbid!) she rise from the dead and come back home." If one sets that comic abrasiveness against Carmi's love poetry, of which there is much, what seems missing in Carmi is not the pain (and joy) of love but the language, sensuous and complex, apt to recall those feelings. There are a number of exceptions to this, such as "That's why a blemish grew / like a wild membrane / on his left shoulder" ("Sketches For a Portrait"), and "we have neither weight nor contour, / treading the same air / like twisted fire" ("Platform No. 8"). "Wild membrane" and "twisted fire" show Carmi's ability to capture physical phenomena with the fugitive punty of child-like apprehension. This is Carmi at his best. Where he is less happy is in his mechanical application of a device such as parallelism: "I follow you / as a plane chases its shadow. / Only after we land / can we be one again." ("In the Air"). Carmi's enemy is his ease.

Michael Akillian also smoothes his apprehensions in a cursive line; the enjambed phrases through a verb in the way that exemplifies much recent American poetry. (The interested reader will find some objections to this cadenced verse in an article by Marjorie Perloff, "The Linear Fallacy", *Georgia Review*, Winter 1981). Thus "The light pales and drops / into the trees. Hunger blows." But here the flow is the result of something altogether more active than Carmi's syntax. Indeed, Akillian can re-form language on an altogether more fundamental correspondence to experience. And in the poem "The Eating of Names", he neither surrenders the poet to the demands of narrative nor suspends the narrative while doling out some poetry.

In the last section of *Shadows of Time*, Haig Khatchadourian uses the Eliot of "Ash Wednesday" and *Four Quartets* as already formulated counters for an approximation to his religious experience. But if the old experience is perpetually bright, the ancient experience of God meaningful, expression should derive from one's own; another's language, like another's faith, is not enough. There are, however, fresh items, "a little octagon of thought / that suddenly grows arboreal" ("A Poem is an Organic Thing"). Khatchadourian is better when he does something similar to what Akillian does at his best: "pupils press uncertainly through / the breach in the botched well / from the tunnel dug with the bare hands / into the other's soul". Imperfect though it is, there is here that quality of taking the facts of physical apprehension and turning them into poetry through narrative.

"The Task", by Blake Morrison, printed here, is the first part of a long poem, to be included in a volume which will be published shortly. Two further sections from the poem will be published in forthcoming issues of the *TLS*.

The closing date for entries to the 1984 National Poetry Competition is November 1. The competition, organized by the Poetry Society in association with BBC Radio 3, is open to anyone over sixteen who lives, works, or studies in the UK, the Channel Islands or Eire. The judges this year are James Berry, Hugo Williams and George MacBeth. Further details and entry forms are available from most public libraries, or (with see) National Poetry Competition, National Poetry Centre, 21 Earl's

from The Inquisitor

He had repeatedly hid himself, he said, for hours together behind a bank at the seaside, (our favourite seat,) and overheard our conversation. At first he fancied, that we were aware of our danger; for he often heard me talk of one *Spy Nozy*, which he was inclined to interpret of himself, and of a remarkable feature belonging to him; but he was speedily convinced that it was the name of a man who had made a book and lived long ago. Our talk ran most upon books, and we were perpetually desiring each other to look at *this*, and to listen to *that*; but he could not catch a word about politics.

Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*

I: The Task

What trust would be like they never explained.

The eye of a deer miles away in woodland,
Children running at the edge of a town....

But this was not their way of talking.

In a panelled room in an annex

To the ministry they laid down all the terms.

Knowledge is death. Trust no one, least of all

Friends. Loyalty? There are some secrets here

So terrible we keep them from ourselves.

So they gave you Finland, which was OK

At first but then it got boring. Contacts were scarce

- They had tightened the borders and the Gulf-

One said Estonian, straight from le Carré.

Who shared with you ham omelettes, beer and *frites*.

You worked from home, mostly, the cottage

By the kalefields. Rachel, you were sure,

Was having her first affair and you'd return

From Helsinki unannounced, hoping to surprise her.

There were times it felt like someone's dream

Your own had got snared up with - the lies

To be told for the sake of the country,

The endless undertones like schoolboys

Whispering in class. The weeks billowed

Around you like a huge tent, roomy with light.

You leant back in the captain's chair

And got no further. The cases proved

Intractable or turned out not to count.

Then came the call from the Director.

You do not smoke but watch him tapping

His cigarette against the silver case.

Your wife, yes, and children? He gazes down

To where the Thames and its bridges glitter

Like a cold-frame. *A special job's come up.*

Someone arrived in London yesterday

We think may be of use. Be careful, now:

Only scholarship will help you to survive.

But you must wait, you have been told you must,

And the paper they give you is just bumf.

The officials at their desks, light through

A venetian blind lining them like notepads,

Are engaged in lies. The text is for the enemy

While you proceed with oral tradition

In the outposts of the nation - a racecourse,

Perhaps, or unpatronised bar, will bring

The muttered codeword from a stranger.

And the men, when they speak, are not reassuring.

Scabbling clerks, Pegasus couriers, stoolies

And sneaks, princes of the cubbyhole.

And keyhole, neighbours charged with an exquisite

Sense of duty, whose trade is the tip-off

And the unsigned note, who want no part

And don't appear in the acknowledgements page,

From whose aleck antennae nothing escapes;

The anonymous company of God -

And whose anonymous company you keep.

Today's one, trilby worn low as an eyeshade,

His collar's V deep as a railway cutting.

Turned from the river to proffer two names:

Treslowa, Binjon. But where are these to take you?

Ironic light seemed to play about his eyes:

Even the reeds might seem to whisper

The betrayal of a king. There is nothing

In the river but reflection and waste.

Rebels against capitalism

José Harris

P.D. ANTHONY
John Ruskin's Labour: A study of Ruskin's social theory
220pp. Cambridge University Press. £20.
0521252334
WILLIAM MORRIS
Collected Letters: Volume 1, 1848-1880
Edited by Norman Kelvin
626pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £30.
0631065012
A.L. MORTON (Editor)
Political Writings of William Morris
259pp. Lawrence and Wishart. £7.50.
0853155860

After the general election of 1906 the *Review of Reviews* interviewed the twenty-nine MPs belonging to the newly-formed Labour Party, to discover which great writers had most influenced their political beliefs. By far the most popular proved to be John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle, followed at a distance by J. S. Mill. Marx was scarcely mentioned. The existence of a Carlyle-Ruskin vein in English labour-cum-socialist thought has always been acknowledged by historians, but the precise details of this tradition have never been fully and critically explored. The causes of this neglect are partly stylistic, partly ideological. Carlyle's tortuous crankiness makes him impenetrably obscure to most modern readers; and though Ruskin's aesthetic writings continue to attract interest the portentous idealism of his social comment is very remote from modern political taste. A more serious obstacle to late twentieth-century understanding, however, is the ideological ambiguity of the Ruskin-Carlyle tradition: there is something profoundly disconcerting in the context of the 1980s about a pair of writers both of whom exhibit extreme social radicalism and the highest of high Toryism pulling together at the same yoke. Modern interpreters have been far more concerned with prudent dissection of the Carlyle and Ruskin marriages than with serious analysis of their social and political ideas.

P. D. Anthony's new study of Ruskin attempts to fill this gap in the history of radical theory, and claims that a re-examination of the heritage embodied by Ruskin offers the modern Labour Party the only way out of its current intellectual impasse. He argues that there is an inner coherence between Ruskin's aesthetics and his social theory and that the clue to this relationship lies in his doctrine of work. Just as Ruskin admired Gothic buildings because he believed that they were the supreme embodiment of the creative activity of individual workmen, so he extolled high medieval society because he believed that it had given fullest scope to dignified, creative work - work for work's sake, rather than as an instrument of profit or remuneration.

Ruskin's condemnation of capitalism for estranging man from his noblest function was as savage as that of Marx, but his prescription was very different. The line of escape from competitive individualism lay not in socialism and egalitarianism, but in the recapitulation of a morally legitimate hierarchical society based on a network of mutual obligations. Within such a society labour and its reward would be not a question of utilitarian calculation but a creative act endowed with transcendent purpose. Property would be communally owned, though functions would vary according to the skills and attitudes of individual citizens.

Such a vision, Anthony claims, constitutes a radical alternative to the Marxian critique of capitalism, and has influenced a long line of anti-materialist thinkers from Durkheim and Hobson to E. F. Schumacher and Ivan Illich. Above all he claims that it was Ruskin rather than Marx who inspired the thought of William Morris. It was *The Stones of Venice* rather than *Capital* which fuelled Morris's attack on bourgeois forms of socialism which supposed that a new society could be brought about not by a change in human values, but by mechanistic changes in ownership and organization. In spite of Morris's own involvement in practical politics, his main political achievement lay in his advocacy of Ruskin's belief

reformation of society and the only way to achieve it was by a revolution of values achieved in individuals by the teaching, preaching and precept of individual social leaders.

Anthony's theme is a fascinating one, and he is surely right to claim that the relationship between Ruskin and Morris deserves much closer attention from historians than it has so far received. Morris himself wrote, in *How I Became a Socialist*, that Ruskin was his "master" in his rebellion against capitalism and modern civilization. Unfortunately, however, though it raises interesting questions, *John Ruskin's Labour* advances our understanding of Ruskin's social doctrines scarcely at all. It conveys almost no sense of historical context, and the method adopted by the author is discursive and didactic rather than analytical. In particular, Ruskin's attack on utilitarianism as a fundamentally irrational and incoherent doctrine is mentioned in passing, but receives none of the systematic treatment that it deserves: mere quotation is scarcely an adequate response to the immense technical sophistication of modern variants of utilitarian theory. As a social theorist, Ruskin needs and deserves far more rigorous analysis, both to pinpoint his modern significance and to locate him accurately in the museum of the history of ideas.

William Morris has been luckier in his political interpreters than Ruskin, since both the Stalinist and the humanist versions of E. P. Thompson's biography are classic works. Yet both editions of Thompson's study are so inextricably interwoven with his own (Thompson's) private intellectual history, that the precise nature of Morris's political identity remains a matter of debate. The publication of primary source material, in the form of Morris's collected letters and a new and extended edition of his political writings, is therefore a welcome event.

Volume One of the Princeton edition of the letters, edited by Norman Kelvin, is a physically beautiful work: Morris himself would surely have relished the bold and simple design and pristine clarity of each printed page. The volume covers the period of Morris's childhood, his undergraduate days at Oxford, his uneasy marriage to Jane Burden, his apprenticeship as architect, designer and poet, his part in the founding of Morris and Company, and his involvement in Liberal politics as part of the Bulgarian atrocities campaign of 1877. The letters themselves are of uneven interest and quality. Morris lacked the humour, malice and passionate interest in other people to be a great letter-writer; and many of them are rather pedestrian in content and jolly-public-schoolboy in tone (cathedrals are described as "jolly", food is invariably "grub"). Nevertheless, there are some wonderful passages on such topics as the blackness and bleakness of Iceland, Morris's passion for "northernness" and his deep personal engagement in the technical intricacies of colour and design. We learn a great deal about Morris's hatreds - his loathing of "restoration", his contempt for all (or most) things French, his abomination of Wagner in particular and opera in general ("the most rancorous and degraded of all forms of art - the idea of a sandy-haired German tenor twaddling over the unspeakable voice of Sigurd!") We catch some revealing and moving glimpses of Morris's nobility as a husband and loyalty as a friend. We see also some of Morris's personal limitations, most notably his inability to feel any interest in or sympathy for people who failed to share his own aesthetic concerns.

Some light is thrown on the evolution of Morris's political beliefs (though presumably much more of this will come in a later volume covering Morris's Damascus-road conversion to "practical socialism"). In the mid-1850s he remarks that "I can't enter into politico-social subjects with any interest; for on the whole I see that things are in a middle, and I have no power or vocation to set them right. . . . My work is the embodiment of dreams in one form or another." By the early 1870s, however, he is anticipating with relish the vengeance of the Gods on modern civilization; and by 1878 he is predicting that "no rose-water will cure us; disaster and misfortune of all kinds, I think will be the only thing that will breed a remedy; in

tered references apart, however, the present volume is mainly of interest to those concerned with Morris's aesthetic views: it adds little to the debate on his wider theory of society.

The latter theme is much more extensively covered in A. L. Morton's edition of Morris's writings, originally published in 1973 and now reissued with additional material to celebrate the Morris centenary. This volume lends some credence both to those who wish to see Morris as a fully-fledged disciple of Marx and to those who see him as a Ruskinian medievalist. His political vision of the ideal society of the future seems to me undeniably closer to that of Marx than that of Ruskin: it is a vision based on universal equality and a reintegration of divided human functions rather than on the restoration of a benevolent and legitimized functional hierarchy. There is nothing in Morris of Ruskin's belief that the human social order is held in trust from a transcendent God.

Morris's economic views, however, seem much closer to those of Ruskin than those of Marx. In spite of the claim of Marxian writers that he came round to accepting the role of modern machinery, these writings suggest that such acceptance was never more than grudging and half-hearted. In the communist system of

Slaves of the needle

John Burnett

JAMES A. SCHMIECHEN
Sweated Industries and Sweated Labor: The London clothing trades 1860-1914
209pp. Croom Helm. £19.95
070923724

History is about continuity as well as about change. In concentrating on the dramatic, revolutionary transformations of the Victorian period we tend to relegate to the sidelines those sectors of the economy which do not fit our image of "the century of progress", to regard them as quaint, anachronistic survivors from an earlier, more primitive type of industrial organization which were slowly and painfully extinguished under the inexorable impact of modernization. In particular, this was the simplistic view held of "the sweated trades" until Duncan Bythell first applied the historical microscope to them in 1978, followed now by James Schmiechen's more intensive study of the London clothing trades between 1860 and 1914.

It should at once be said that these are complementary, not merely alternative accounts. Bythell took a wider and longer definition of "sweating" to include the handloom weavers, framework knitters, nail-makers and straw-plaiters from the early nineteenth century onwards, generously acknowledging, "I shall be quite happy if, in due course, others dig deep into local archives in order to explore the many interesting and important areas where I have merely scratched the surface." This is what Schmiechen has done, with particular reference to what later Victorians regarded as the most characteristic forms of "sweating", the outwork garment and footwear trades of London.

Once an élite, skilled trade, strongly unionized and politicized, the London tailors under Francis Place had been powerful enough to lead the successful fight to repeal the Combination Acts in 1824. Ten years later their own strike against piecework and homework collapsed, and the trade was already coming to be sharply divided between the "flints" who worked only for regular wages in the master's shop and the disesteemed "dungs" who were paid lower, piecework rates for work at home. By 1860, Schmiechen argues, the "dungs" had multiplied and the "flints" had shrunk to a small, bespoke section mainly in the West End; in response to a rapid growth in demand for ready-made clothes and an expansion of retail shops selling in conditions of cut-throat competition, tailoring had already shrunk to a sweated trade.

One intriguing question is why tailoring did not follow the course of other labour-intensive trades to become a factory industry. In the long term, of course, it did, but down to 1914, Schmiechen claims (and here he differs from

the future machinery would "to a great extent have served its purpose" and would be "much curtailed". It is difficult to imagine the author of *Capital* looking forward to the day when "we shall not be compelled to go by railway . . . but may indulge our personal inclinations and travel in a tilted wagon or on the hindquarters of a donkey". There is virtually no sense in Morris's writings of what was one of the most central themes of Marxian historical economics; namely the belief that capitalism was not merely wicked and miserable but an indispensable phase in generating the resources necessary for an eventual transition to socialism. Morris's indifference to the problem of scarce resources will probably confirm readers of all persuasions in their belief that he was little more than a talented and attractive Utopian.

Indeed, Morris's tragedy lies in the fact that a watered-down version of his aesthetics has been so triumphant, while the influence of his politics has been virtually nil. Few Englishmen would not like to live in a house like Kolmscott Manor, surrounded by Sussex chairs and chrysanthemum wallpaper. Even fewer would imagine that Morris's politics could possibly bring such a charming eventuality about.

ably the appearance of the sewing-machine, an American invention first demonstrated at the Great Exhibition in 1851 and commonly in use by the 1860s - "one of the most momentous inventions of the second half of the nineteenth century, it revolutionised the consuming habits of the nation and changed the lives of a multitude of working men and women". Since the sewing-machine required no more power than the hand or the leg, it could conveniently be used at home - or rather, in the single rooms, attics and cellars which formed the sweatshops of East London and passed for the homes of thousands of near-destitute women and immigrant Jews. By 1900 a shirt cost a mere quarter of what it had done in 1850. Twenty thousand stitches had gone into it; and a woman on piecework might have earned as little as 5d a day, less what she spent on tram fares collecting work from the contractor.

The response of other distressed groups of workers to intolerable conditions - dockers, gas-workers and match-girls - produced a remarkable burst of collective action in the late 1880s, but, despite many attempts, effective unionization remained impossible in the scattered, home-based sweated trades. Fewer than 3 per cent of the 150,000 women employed in the London clothing trades in 1913 were trade unionists, while attempts at Jewish workers' unions met with squabbles within their ranks and the opposition of the Jewish bourgeois leaders and rabbis as well as some anti-semitism from English unionists. The remedy, it came to be seen, had to lie in public control, either of the places of work, or of wages, or both, the arguments gradually crystallizing around the novel concept of a minimum wage.

The "discovery" of sweating by a series of enquiries from the 1880s onwards, culminating in the influential *Daily News* Sweated Industries Exhibition at Queen's Hall in 1906, therefore played an important part in the Edwardian revolution in social policy. The Trade Boards Act, passed by the Liberal government in 1909, proceeded from the astonishing principle that where a group of workers was powerless to protect itself by combined action the state had a duty to establish representative tribunals to set minimum rates of pay. This, Schmiechen argues, was no simple victory for "pressure from below". The Women's Trade Union League and the more radical Women's Industrial Council were not trade unions, but propagandist and educational agencies heavily reliant on middle and upper-class backing and the support of some MPs. More directly influential on the 1909 Act, the National Anti-Sweating League, was formed after the Exhibition had pricked the conscience of fashionable society, to be an early women's rights movement.

All this is well, interestingly and sometimes movingly documented. The book does not break new ground, for the ground had been lightly ploughed before, but it turns up fresh

John is 16

It was something

Galen Strawson

PADGETT POWELL
Edisto
183pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95.
043637918 X

"This one's true. The one about Theenie's lost grandbaby might have been put together, fiction-mode. But this one happened." The quotation reveals the style and the genre. Stylistically, *Edisto* curls down a mainstream tributary of American literature, a tributary that consists of a series of eddies—Salinger, Bukowski, Vonnegut, and so on; it is word-bending, purple-punching, hyper-lacoustic, smart. As for the genre, it is semi-fictionalized autobiography—Simons (pronounced Simmons) Monigault, twelve years old and precocious with the words, living with his mother at Edisto Beach on the south Atlantic coast of the United States, growing up in a "backwater of blacks" among the "scabbling" palms and palm-ets, the mudflats and the mullet, the sand fleas and the fiddler crabs. His mother, "the Duchess", "the Doctor" (a literary PhD doctor), teaches at a local college and drinks. She is great-hearted, she holds her sentiment well. They have an old, black, foolish-wise servant called Theenie (for Athenia) who lives a little way off, in a shack wallpapered with yellow news-cuttings. "The Progenitor", or Daddy, collects Simons the Boy for two Custody days twice a month. The Progenitor is all right, but he is pretty straight. Uncool, in fact.

Apart from going to school, Simons frequents the Baby Grand where the Negroes hang out. This is a "crummy dive-looking joint" with a beating heart, Jinx and Preston play pool. Jake, the owner, stuns at the wall. These men are masters of the art of linguistic compression, "two-cylinder syntax" dudes. Simons is the only white, and *Edisto* simply presents a short stretch of his almost adolescent life. It has no strong story or dramatic closure. Instead, it has scenes and themes. A fishing scene, a first date scene, a road accident scene, a boxing match scene (Frazier versus Ali), a lightly handled sexual education theme, a southern country Negro cool theme. It is about a clever child catching on to adults—their mendacity, their vulnerability and ignorance, their childishness. Any remaining structure is imparted by the arrival, sojourn, and final departure of a young man who comes to serve some trivial subpoena on Theenie's daughter Louister. Louister is not to be found, and Theenie, who has a thing about white bureaucracy, bolts into the pslms. The young process-server effortlessly passes a few covert complicity and compatibility tests with the Doctor and the Boy, and moves in as the lover of the former (he conceals this from Simons, and pretends to sleep in Theenie's shack) and the informal art-of-life instructor of the latter. Simons names him Taurus in a tense moment of introduction at the Baby Grand, where Taurus reacts in just the right way, and makes it into community.

A man of unthinking balance, Taurus guides Simons towards puberty and poise, until the Doctor and the Progenitor decide to get back together again, and Taurus has to leave. Taurus knows about transience and timing; he slips away in the dawn, and the reunited Monigaults move on to the smart, fenced, rural-urban acres of Hilton Head, where Simons is enrolled at the Cooper Boyd Academy for "high-water khaki duck-asses, white-soled Top-Sidered, gentry bound for college and careers suitable to family name". At first he miums the Edisto backwater beach; he feels like a stuffed bird, one of those "bullet-shaped birds in Audubon's drawer". But not for long, and so the book comes to a stop.

Edisto has a dead-beating refrain, a recurring, super-nonchalant comment: "It was something". But in between the studiously neutral sentences that pace the narrative ("About this time began a run of events...") it looked about time I did some investigation of girls.") there is a lot of rich-segmented *maitre grasse*, and some berserker poetry language ("The mouse and the bruise [the two boxes] performed their bobbing and hugging, like tiny terrors against the very sky"). This does not always come off, and Padgett Powell can over-

comes familiar, and begins to work out (unless one is excessively fastidious). Powell has an ear; he has some hot phrases, and shies from cliché. He is fond of the *funky* demonstrative pronoun ("It is a very crazy dog that tightens out this chain from a log truck.") He addresses his reader with a "Now this is what gets me" intimacy which is irritating at first, but later proves to be a fast and successful vehicle for his phrasemaking.

As a writer, Powell is something of a performance artist, and he makes a thing of being arresting, coupling essentially disparate items, slamming the angles of inconsequence like a tank—stop-pivot-start, stop-pivot-start. The book is, consequently, quite hard to read. But that is no objection to it—it just slows the reader down, and directs attention to its style. And in fact it is a book about style. It is about style or poise in communication, and the thought is roughly this. Extreme nonchalance, or cool, is the strongest (though not the only) lynchpin of emotional authenticity. To be good, communication must be cool (cool entails, but is more than, tact). You can be com-

Believing in the beyond

Julian Symons

FRANCIS KING
Voices in an Empty Room
272pp. Hutchinson. £8.95.
0091586704

Hugo is a literary giant working on a monumental edition of Meredith's letters. He is married with two children, but has homosexual urges or twinges. Lavinia is a successful, highly regarded actress. Writing in the *TLS*, Hugo said her Hedda was the finest he had seen. Bridget is "a small, pretty woman of forty-eight" whose husband has been killed in the Falklands. What joins these three characters? The belief in an afterlife, or at least in the possibility of reaching beyond the material world through psychic phenomena. When Hugo falls to his death from the balcony of a Brighton hotel, his devoted sister (and Meredithian collaborator) Sybil tries to reach him through automatic writing. The suicide of Lavinia's son Stephen moves her to similar activities, and Bridget longs to be in touch with her dead husband Roy.

Francis King's *Voices in an Empty Room* tells these separate stories very cleverly, shifting from past to present through sections called "Was" and "Is" (shifting tenses too, in a way that occasionally makes for awkward reading), and ending with the three women meeting for the first time. This final passage is called "Will Be?"; the interrogation mark presumably meant to suggest that this may not happen, although use of the future tense here rather curiously makes the tone assured rather than tentative. The individual stories under the "Was" headings are all well told. Hugo, like his old friend, former minor ambassador Sir Henry Latimer, has an interest in psychic phenomena, and when Henry's housekeeper Mrs Lockit talks about her two psychic nephews, their curiosity is aroused. The boys, one tough, the other tender, turn out to demonstrate no more than the early experiments of Professor Rhina, by which "Shackleton can name the thought of cold / Before that thought has got into a mind", as a poet has put it. Both men are excited, quite a lot of money changes hands, the tender boy becomes Hugo's "pale, beautiful darling". Hugo has known "the bliteness of the etiolated child's spirit thin upon his tongue". It would be wrong to reveal the resolution of this story, the trick that is finally turning is the tale of the ingenious young officer from Roy's unit who calls on Bridget shortly after her husband's death, and best of all because most realistic the account of the way in which Lavinia sacrifices her son to the demands of her own theatrical and personal life, and suffers agonies of remorse when he hangs himself with the scarf she has given him as a birthday present. Francis King's capacity for

municatively cool without really knowing it, without indeed knowing what it is to be cool (in such a way that you put it into words); you don't have to be as self-conscious about your communicative modes as young Simons is. But nearly all cool communication is highly indirect, however direct it may sound. And as often as not, the full message is worked out by its recipient some time after it is delivered.

And yet the deliverers of the messages—the Doctor, Taurus, Theenie—always know, in some sense or other, just about exactly what they are doing. And, by the operation of some kind of totally unpegged but justified faith (another property of the communicatively cool), they know that the intended recipients of their message will get them in the end, and in good time. Taurus is the master of this—he is a master of productive reticence, of the maximally economical verbal plant, the delayed action semantic drop. And he receives other people's indirect messages immediately, invariably responding with complete appropriateness. This involves no conscious cognitive process on his part. He has fully automatic

Skill, ingenuity, some phrases finely turned; yet this is not a successful novel, in part because the three stories remain essentially separate, so that there is a distinct and uncomfortable change of gear from one to another. More important than this, though, is the fact that King has chosen, in psychic belief, a linking theme unsuited to his talent. He operates most successfully by indirection, so that, for example, we are never positively told until Stephen's death of his sado-masochistic inclinations. Such obliquities are not suited to accounts of activities like automatic writing. In life intelligent people may be deeply credulous—Conan Doyle believed in those photographs of fairies at the bottom of the garden—but in this respect life won't do for fiction.

We are told that Hugo and Sybil had always "longed to believe in the possibility that the so-called laws of nature could, however brief-

ly, intermittently and inexplicably, be suspended", but this remains incredible. Hugo has the sceptical intelligence of a naturalist, Sybil's serious view of her own automatic writing seems equally implausible, and we are shown nothing in their lives to account for that longing to believe. It is also highly unlikely that any investigator would have been satisfied for long with such simple denials as those offered to Hugo and Henry by the nephews. The effect is to make the characters seem silly—but Hugo, Sybil and Lavinia are far from silly people. The book's final suggestion, that although much trickery exists in the psychic field, some kind of communicative outside logical knowledge is possible to make with a particular fine tuning, is rather anticlimactic. What are essentially three clever and at times moving stories have been stitched into a novel that is less than the sum of its parts.

Recovering the glow

Brian Morton

JOHN KNOWLES
A Stolen Past
242pp. Constable. £7.95.
0094657300

The stolen past of John Knowles's title is tangible: a priceless Romanov jewel, taken from Alexei and Zinaida Trouvenskoy, impoverished White Russian exiles in the United States. The Millsa Diamond, last buffer against financial disaster and last link with imperial glories, disappears in the aftermath of a vodka-soaked party at the Trouvenskoy's New Haven house.

There is no mystery about the theft. It quickly emerges that the safe has not been broken but opened by combination and then damaged in a bid to hide the truth. The thief is Greg Trouvenskoy, the son trapped between two cultures, obsessed by the money he hears in the voice of his Vassar girlfriend. Greg resembles a latter-day Gatsby, doomed to failure, desperately trying to reconcile the success-ethic of America with the memory of a divinely appointed aristocracy.

Ultimately the diamond is only the fulcrum for an altogether more abstract fiction; the novel centres on the careers of three writers. Alexei dreams of supporting his family with popular histories of the Romanov dynasty; not only is he without talent, but it is his wife who belongs to the inner circle of the Imperial family, and her memoirs that publishers queue (unsuccessfully) to commission. The narrator is Allan Pribeton, by 1980 a hugely successful novelist, in the early 1950s a Yale student and Greg Trouvenskoy's room-mate. Pribeton's first efforts at fiction are supported and encouraged by Reeves Lockhart, himself a suc-

cess. His communication is one sweet reflex of sensibility. He has perfect cool.

So it is that *Edisto*, a book which crosses the Atlantic on the well-feathered wings of hype, excerpted in the *New Yorker*, "better" than *The Catcher in the Rye*, film rights sold for \$250,000—is a highly optimistic book. Failure of communication is, no doubt, one of the great literary themes of our time, but *Edisto* is a book about people succeeding in communicating because, drunk, blunt, or just plain lost, they have somehow or other managed to acquire tact, delicacy, a fully developed awareness of the extreme violability of mental territory, and a correspondingly developed sense of the power and necessity of indirectness. *Edisto* is not a book that can really be said to "uncover a hitherto unknown segment of existence", and so it is, according to Milan Kundera's highly stylish, sadly (or comically) lopsided and pompous disquisition on the novel in the July 19 *New York Review of Books*, an "immense" novel. But it is nevertheless a worthwhile, rather slight, piece of work.

Scientific stories

John Durant

GILLIAN BEER
Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and nineteenth-century fiction
312pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £17.95.
0710095058

Potentially, the history of science is a fertile meeting-ground for scholars trained in a wide variety of disciplines. In practice, however, such meetings are disappointingly few; and it is therefore a pleasure to be able to recommend a book which offers fresh insights into familiar themes in the history of science by dealing with them in a quite new way. *Darwin's Plots* is a work of literary criticism about a particular body of rather well-known Victorian literature. What makes it novel is simply that it treats major works of science (particularly Darwin's *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man*, but also and as it were in passing works by Lamarck, Lyell and many others) in pretty much the same terms as major works of fiction (George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, and—in much less detail—the works of Thomas Hardy). What makes it such a success is that it convinces us that these are appropriate terms in both cases.

Gillian Beer is interested in the imaginative power of evolutionary theory in Victorian and, one suspects, contemporary culture. In the first half of the book, she explores Darwin's most important theoretical writings as pieces of literature employing a wealth of linguistic devices to convey not one but rather a whole

constellation of more-or-less explicit meanings. Darwin, she writes, "was seeking to create a story of the world—a fiction"; his theory was above all "a form of imaginative history", and as such it was "closer to narrative than to drama". In his effort to weave a new and breathtaking design from old and often frankly unsuitable materials, she suggests that Darwin moved "into a role more like that of a creative artist". His work gave new significance to familiar terms, unsettling the imagination in multiple and often unpredictable ways; and it was this that made it such a potent influence far beyond the confines of natural history.

The second half of the book investigates the ways in which Darwin's plots were absorbed into the work of George Eliot and Hardy. Beer discovers Darwinian themes in the very organization of her texts, as well as in the complex mutations undergone by such everyday ideas as breeding, descent, growth, inheritance, kinship, succession and transformation. George Eliot, in particular, is portrayed as a key figure who picked up and passed on the imaginative and emotional implications of evolutionary theory (and much other Victorian science), as they were widely felt throughout her culture.

There is obvious justification for this approach to Victorian science and literature. In the mid-nineteenth century scientific and literary prose still shared a common language; and what is more, scientists and imaginative writers still read one another's works. In his autobiography, Darwin records that as a young man he had greatly enjoyed Milton, Gray, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley; he even took Milton with him on his long land-journeys

of manhood", lead inevitably to her conclusion that these writers are "amongst the latest voices in the long tradition of liberal humanism in English literature".

It becomes evident that Swinford, with her background in Oxford academia, is as much concerned to defend the liberal ideology which these fantasies enshrine as the genre itself. Like C.S. Lewis, one of her principal protagonists, against whom even L.C. Knights launched an attack in the late 1930s for his "staunch conservatism" and refusal to ask "all awkward questions", Swinford evades the problem of her position. Her prolonged attention to plots, characters and moral philosophizing leaves no space for uneasy questions of any kind, such as the use of anthropomorphism in the genre's avuncular hobbits, aristocratic white mice, etc. History is marginalized, reduced to an oblique reflection, while the function of such regressive fantasies as Tolkien's, nostalgic for a pre-Conquest England, or more widespread reveries to pre-industrial utopias, are not considered. She provides no morphology of the

form, shows no familiarity with structuralist or psychoanalytic theorizations of the genre, nor does she discuss writers like Peake who fit less comfortably into the at times facile optimism of her categories. Instead, her approach is broadly thematic, focusing on talking beasts, time travel, dual universes, physical prowess, transformation, with frequent reminders of high moral seriousness.

Given the strong desire for otherness which the genre embodies, it's not a little dispiriting to realize how readily it aligns itself with such an unreflective liberal humanism. The very grounds of "autonomy" and exclusiveness on which it is being defended here mean that whatever spiritual yearnings it represents quickly become discredited as insubstantial, as nostalgic escapism or projection, thereby giving even more support to those materialistic critics who read all spiritual longing as sublimation or displacement of more "empirical" concerns. For, to quote Stevens again, "What is divinity if it can come / Only in silent shadows and in dreams?"

Fresco and panorama

Martin Swales

JOHN OSBORNE
Meyer or Fontaine? German literature after the Franco-Prussian War 1870/71
143pp. Bonn: Bouvier. DM 32.
3416017501

In this perceptive study John Osborne shows how the work of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer and Theodor Fontane parades of the attitudes towards history and historical art that were current in the 1870s. He suggests that Meyer works with the grandiose historical fresco against a colourful background, decisive historical events and striking personages are depicted. Fontane, by contrast, is associated with the contemporary fondness for genre painting, whereby history is expressed in a panoramic view in which there is a great profusion of tiny detail. The effect of this affectionate respect for modest lives and humble circumstances is that the observer finds himself asking what is meant to be fore- and

POSTAGE INLAND 16p AIRMAIL 21p

In the wake of the whaleboat

Lachlan Mackinnon

A. ROBERT LEE (Editor)
Herman Melville: Reassessments
221pp. Vision Press/Barnes and Noble. £14.95.
0854783652

No programme is announced for this collection of ten essays, but it emerges that their common concern is with Melville as self-conscious writer. References to Borges, Nabokov and Chinese boxes convey a flavour of postmodernism by anticipation. This atrium develops through the book, which follows the chronology of Melville's career. Herbie Butterfield discovers that *Typee* and *Omoo* belong to the roving, bachelor days of Melville's imagination, and wants them to be valued for their youthfulness. By contrast, Harold Beaver is concerned with inconsistencies in *Mardi*, and finds that it deals with a "splintering of consciousness", which may in part arise from sexual anxieties about Melville's marriage, and which makes the book symbolic rather than allegorical or epic.

James H. Justus, dealing with *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*, is interested in the sexuality of the narrator in each case. Neither can achieve Ishmael's acceptance of comradeship homosexuality and cannot therefore break away properly from his past. The editor, A. Robert Lee, tries to return *Moby-Dick* to its past as an anatomy, resembling both Burton's and a tradition of all-encompassing works which runs from *Don Quixote* through Proust and *Poerson to Gravity's Rainbow*. It is hard to see how such a rag-bag serves any useful function of generic definition.

Describing *Moby-Dick* as a symbolic novel about exploitation, Eric Mottram does not mention Robert Lowell's "The Quaker Graveyard at Nantucket", an earlier instance of such reading. "Melville substitutes wariness for civil disobedience", Mottram says, because he recognizes that authority and domination may be necessary evils. "The impulse to believe... even if only in the possibility of belief, however perversely and despite all the evidence", distances *Pierre* from the postmodernism it anticipates, according to Richard Gray, but his essay spends more time analysing fictiveness than assessing feeling, and does not go as far as it should emotionally.

William Wasserstrom's "Melville the Man-nist: Form in the Short Fiction", on the other hand, goes too far. Wasserstrom rejects "Mrs. Leavis's reconstructionist style... and the deconstructionist as well"; he finds an important relation between Melville's provisional contortions and James Madison's view of political experiment. Better something than nothing is, Wasserstrom argues, the Americanness which relates Melville to history. It is a pity that his essay alone has no footnotes.

The editor reappears to discuss *The Confidence-Man*, which he clearly enjoys but about whose ultimate nature he is not very clear. Andrew Hook directs us to Melville's poetry. He admits that there is no neglected greatness there, though his discussion of war in the poems, especially *Boile-Pieces*, is unusually detailed for this collection.

The worst essay in the book is H. Bruce Franklin's treatment of *Billy Budd*. Franklin does well to set the story in its contemporary context of anxieties about naval power and to examine Melville's views about naval practices as expressed elsewhere. But he asserts that, given this extraneous information, we can apply the description of Claggart as the deadliest kind of madman, who uses reason in the pursuit of irrational ends, to Vere, who should be seen as an unmitigated villain. This reductive view denies the possibility of tragedy and contradicts much in the text, but it has a political motivation: "the guns of the *Bellpotent*... evolve into... Minutemen, Titans, Poseidons, Tridents" and so forth. This unimaginative reading exemplifies all the faults with which the anti-nuclear movement is often charged, including the inability to see its adversaries as human.

Together in apartness

Colin Henfrey

ELISABETH BURGOS-DEBRAY (Editor)
I... Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian woman in Guatemala
251pp. Verso. £18.50 (paperback, £4.95).
0680910830
ROBERT WASSERSTROM
Class and Society in Central Chiapas
357pp. University of California Press. £22.70.
0520046706

I... *Rigoberta Menchú* is the story of a young Guatemalan Indian woman – at twenty-three, extraordinarily young for all she has lived through. It was recorded in the course of a single week in Paris, during January 1982, by a Venezuelan friend and admirer, Elizabeth Burgos-Debray. She then edited it as Rigoberta's autobiography, excluding her original questions and inserting linking passages (without, however, identifying them) where continuity seemed to require it.

Though frankly described in the introduction, these circumstances invite some misgivings from any but an uncritical reader. In particular, how independent of the editor is the optimistic picture which emerges? First, of Indian community life in the impoverished Central Highlands of Guatemala where Rigoberta was born and raised; and second, of her people's struggle against a series of military regimes whose exceptional brutality, even by Central American standards, was relentlessly directed at them. These misgivings are not quite dispelled in the reading; yet the tales and the teller's strength are such that they detract very little from it.

Home was an Indian community in the highland province of El Quiché. This was later a centre of the rural protest led by, among others, Rigoberta and her parents. She starts by recounting her experience of growing up into Quiché culture, with its intense communalism, which emerges as a response to wider social forces. The community is a way of survival. Even Rigoberta's childhood is shaped by their moving up into the *altiplano*, away from encroaching land speculators; and by trucking down to the coastal plantations as temporary coffee and cotton-pickers. Their openness is governed not by isolation but an exploitation stamped with the eccentricity in

which Latin America specialises. When her brother dies of insecticide poisoning, the plantation charges a burial fee, then sacks the rest of the family for losing a day's work in mourning. Rigoberta describes her experience as being that of most poor Guatemalans; more widely, it is that of most poor Latin Americans born into a changing rural setting.

As a teenager in the mid-1970s, she is already working as a maid in Guatemala City. It is here that she hears of her father Vicente's imprisonment; his crime having been to organize legal resistance to new threats to the community's land. Released a year later, he joins the United Peasant Confederation, the CUC. Particularly in the Central Highlands, where such problems are rife, the Confederation gathers strength, despite growing repression by the regime of General Romeo Lucas García, himself a leading land speculator. Vicente is next kidnapped by the military for continuing with his resistance. He emerges physically broken from torture but, far from retreating, begins to travel and to work clandestinely for the union. His wife and then Rigoberta follow suit. Later she finds that, unknown to her, her younger sister has done the same. Rigoberta's main task is to recruit fellow migrant workers to lead village resistance in the highlands to enforced takeovers of land.

The whirlpool of violence quickens around them. In 1979, her sixteen-year-old brother, still in the village, is seized by the military, along with other young union supporters. In protest peasants from the region, including her mother, occupy the national congress. The military reply by summoning the local population to the village of Chajul. Here the horribly tortured and maimed detainees, including her brother, are exhibited; their tortures and the reasons for them (associating with "the communists") are frankly explained by an army captain. They are then soaked in petrol and set on fire. Months later, Rigoberta's father is killed in another protest occupation, this time of the Spanish embassy. Then, in April 1980, her mother is caught, also horribly tortured and left to die under military guard on a public hillside.

In two moving chapters near the end, Rigoberta describes her memories of her parents: her father's serenity, and her mother's Quiché woman's strength. After another year

of work with the Popular Front, now named after those who died in the embassy occupation, Rigoberta is sent into Mexican exile. She soon returns, and when recorded in Paris in 1982, was travelling to gain support for the Front. This unadorned personal testament conveys the dilemma of Central America more closely than any political or academic analysis could do. The misgivings which persist result from the presentation, not from the story (whose central events have been independently documented). There is a point beyond which reverence for oral history of this kind can actually prejudice its impact, and such reverence seems to be the reason why the editor and publisher eschew any factual account (even a basic chronology) of the wider Guatemalan setting; without it the non-specialist may not easily appreciate the full significance of the story.

It was in Guatemala, after all, with the overthrow of Arbenz in 1954, that the US began its modern wave of intervention against popular movements in Latin America. Rigoberta herself gives no hint of this history, and only a very hazy one of the contemporary political setting, especially the all-important links between the peasant and guerrilla movements. In itself this strengthens her account, as a rare and genuine statement of popular experience "from below". As an editorial omission, though, it threatens to reduce a book which should have been readable and read by every US college student, to a text for the faithful and the already informed. Yet it still has the makings of a classic.

In his more conventional academic study of Chiapas in Southern Mexico (thus close to Northern Guatemala) Robert Wasserstrom takes issue strongly with the statically cultural "community" studies of the region produced by Sol Tax and his followers. Instead Wasserstrom proposes to combine social anthropology with history. The result is a comprehensive study of Central (ie, Indian) Chiapas through time, and in its wider social relations. Only when he reaches the nineteenth century does he take the two local communities of Zinacantan and Chamula as units of study. These he sees as anything but the "traditional" and exclusive coordinates of Indian life, which is what both anthropologists and local power-holders have seen them as. Instead, Wasserstrom argues, they are the relatively recent outcome

of socio-economic forces which have always given ethnicity its changing shapes and meanings, from the Spanish conquest to the present. The vacuum left by the destruction of indigenous political systems was filled in colonial Chiapas by the Indians' adoption of Las Casas's vision of a Christian Indian theocracy. Yet the nearest they came to this was in their frustrated millennial movements. The reality was very different: the *repartimiento* system meant the virtually obligatory production of tributary commodities (cocoa and cotton), which reduced the Indians' numbers. The religious brotherhoods, with their "communal" hierarchies and fiestas, were the Church's primary means of tapping a declining surplus. With independence and the growth of agricultural exports, both Church and Indian corporate landholdings came under pressure. What "communities" did persist or expand, it was a contradictory process: for the Indians it meant access to land, but also dues for a weakened Church with which they now lacked effective ties. It was also uneven and erratic. Chamula increasingly came to consist of nuclear households of migrant labourers, whereas Zinacantan retained its community land and formal fictitious patrilineages, as a means of exchanging land for dependants. The survival of the "community" in the present century was the vehicle, not of cultural solidarity, but of class differentiation, which was now an essentially national process.

The impression Wasserstrom gives of Quiché communities is so different from that given in I... *Rigoberta Menchú* that it makes the latter seem somewhat Utopian. The perspective of the two books is not that different, however, since in both ethnicity is seen as being interwoven with the social struggle, even if the outcome in the two cases is clearly very different. Yet even Wasserstrom sees contemporary Indian folk Christianity, despite its ambiguity, as still in some measure the living expression of "the same language in which their forefathers first prayed to a new but vengeful god nearly five centuries ago". Rigoberta would probably agree, though quite rightly, she would include the foremothers. Both books add notably, in their different ways, to our understanding of the centuries-long struggle which continues today in what is Central America's largest, and most predominantly Indian country.

By patronage and petroleum

John Lynch

JUDITH EWELL
Venezuela: A century of change
258pp. Hurst. £12.50.
090583836X

Venezuela has been neglected by historians in the English-speaking world, perhaps from inertia; perhaps in the belief that its study lacked intellectual content, that it was more important to know what was being done in Paris or London than what was happening on the banks of the Orinoco. Venezuelan history has been underrated even by Latin Americanists, and this great laboratory of human experience – the recipient of Bourbon reforms, the early home of national liberation movements, the scene of classical caudillism, the projector of OPBC – has remained a closed book, its past forgotten, its historical links with Britain unknown or ignored.

In spite of the gradual accumulation of monographic research, works of synthesis and appraisal have remained rare and for many years students and other readers – Venezuelan no less than foreign – have had to make do with out-dated texts which lagged behind modern research and frequently described a Venezuela which bore no relation to the past or the present. Suddenly the situation has changed. Following close upon John Lombardi's historical study comes Judith Ewell's account of modern Venezuela, both works combining academic quality and general appeal, and each possessing an identity of its own. While Lombardi covers Venezuelan history from the beginning, Dr Ewell focuses on Venezuela since the 1870s.

missing evidently the very latest work on Gómez and the oil companies, but otherwise comprehensive enough to satisfy even the specialist. The book's occasional comments on the history of Venezuela's boundary dispute with Guyana would have benefited from reference to the research of R.A. Humphreys. And it is surprising that the bibliography fails to include the work of Vallenilla Lanz, *Cesarismo Democrático*, recently republished in Caracas, a work of some insight and one of the few original Venezuelan contributions to political ideas since the writings of Bolívar.

Dr Ewell is sympathetic towards Venezuela and enthusiastic for her subject. Justifiably so. She has a good story to tell, one of dramatic change and unchanging structures; and she tells it well. She begins with what she aptly calls "the dusty and dictatorial nation" of the late nineteenth century, the Venezuela of coffee, cattle and *caudillos*, a primitive country, whose government, bureaucracy and material prospects had probably worsened since colonial times and whose only gain since then, independence, appeared sometimes at risk. But even the timeless *caudillos*, those dictators, tyrants, megalomaniacs and mediocrities who ruled Venezuela from 1830 to 1935, were subject to the pressures of the age; as the author shows, the last of the line, Juan Vicente Gómez, gave Venezuela sufficient stability and continuity to provide the conditions in which the petroleum industry and with it some modernization could take root and develop.

As a factor to explain political change, the petroleum card has to be played with care; historians have used it to explain both the stability of the Gómez system and the subsequent survival of democracy. Ewell is more cautious. She argues that oil revenues, while they en-

sufficient economic and social change to produce new middle groups who, in alliance with students, workers and peasants, fought for political change and a share in the nation's wealth. The successful achievement of democracy from 1958 obviously owed something to oil revenues but is also explained by the author in terms of ideology, political judgment, party organization, leadership, the character of the military, and ultimately a growing sense of national identity.

The transition from caudillism to constitutionalism is clearly described, and Ewell provides a very intelligible account of Rómulo Betancourt's first government, the *trienio* of 1945-48. Curiously she says nothing of the international context in which this existed, the brief interlude between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War, nor of comparable experiences in other parts of Latin America, where reform was followed by reaction. Her account of Betancourt's second administration, 1958-63, brings out the new forces at work in Venezuela, the government's increased responsibility for economic development and social welfare, the centralization of decision-making, and the controlled politicization of every aspect of public life. She follows the government's careful path through political minefields between the military and the revolutionaries, and her mini-prosopography of the left is a useful addition to the usual account of ideology.

Ewell is obviously aware of the role of patronage in Venezuelan politics and its dominance over policy issues. The political parties are held together not by clear and distinct ideologies but by careful distribution of rewards, to regions, to groups, to individuals. It is worth pointing out, however, that this is

legacy of caudillism, which worked essentially through patron-client relationships. The political boss who can deliver votes is the direct heir of the *caudillo*; while the latter distributed land, offices and privileges to his followers, the politicians distribute public funds channelled through the party.

The profligacy of the state from 1973, the year of the revolution in oil prices and revenues, brings the author to the final phase of her history. Petrofunds, of course, were used not simply to persuade and corrupt but also to promote development and welfare, and it is fair to say that most Venezuelans received benefits from the wealth of the 1970s. But in the event Venezuela could not accommodate the boom. The ghosts of the past reappeared to haunt her, and the limits of modernization could still be seen; a new economy reaping on an old infrastructure, great resources managed by a nineteenth-century bureaucracy, state development projects run like private fiefdoms.

The oil bonanza, it is well known, has been followed by crisis, and Venezuela has joined the debtor nations of the hemisphere. It now provides *bolívar* only a little stronger than the *pesos* of its neighbours. The process culminated in the fateful year 1983 when, with its financial world collapsing, Venezuela continued to spend in style, opening a new airport, importing Scotch whisky, hosting international congresses, staging a bicentenary worthy of the Liberator, and holding a decisive election. Was 1983 the last year of the old régime? Ewell will tell.

Meanwhile, for an objective survey of events as the country lurched through the prosperous 1970s and early 80s, and an interpretation of this national rake's progress, readers can turn to these well-informed pages, where they

A genius in three dimensions

Howard Colvin

MICHAEL I. WILSON
William Kent: Architect, designer, painter, gardener, 1685-1748
276pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £25
(until September 30, then £30).
0710099835
PETER CAMPBELL (Editor)
A House in Town: 22, Arlington Street, its owners and builders
201pp. Bataford. £15.
0713445637

When Margaret Jourdain wrote the first biography of William Kent in 1948, the serious study of Georgian art and architecture was in its infancy. "Baroque" and "neo-classical" were terms whose relevance to British culture was scarcely admitted, while "Palladian" was a label that could be applied to anything from Hampton Court to Somerset House. French, Dutch and Italian influences were vaguely discerned, but too imprecisely to enable anyone to assess their importance accurately. Now the cult of Palladianism can clearly be seen, not only as a conscious reaction against the Anglo-baroque of Wren, Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor, but also as an insular premonition of European neo-classicism. The precise shares in that cult at Lord Burlington and William Kent may still be a matter for academic debate, but no one would now deny the essential truth of Horace Walpole's dictum that in the reign of George II, Lord Burlington was "the Apollo of the Arts" and William Kent his "proper priest". Nor would they deny that Kent was (as Walpole recognized) a crucial figure in the history of English landscape-gardening, and also a significant one in that of the Gothic Revival (here the creator of Strawberry Hill, sensing a rival, did Kent less than justice).

But even if Kent's reputation is no longer (as the TLS averred in 1949) "at the mercy of Taste and Fashion", there has been no single book in which a competent account of his career is to be found coupled with an informed assessment of his work. Indeed, Kent's versatility as a creative artist was so great that a collection of essays by different hands might have been better calculated to do justice to his achievement than a monograph by a single author. A failure as a painter in two dimensions, he proved to have a genius for three-dimensional design that expressed itself in everything from palaces and public buildings to landscape-gardening, sculpture, furniture and silverware. The grandest of all English State Beds, at Houghton House, is his, and so is that exquisite vessel, the State Barge that he made for Frederick, Prince of Wales. A pioneer of the picturesque in landscape-gardening, he was also the first (in England at least) to envisage a room and its contents as an artistic whole. As a draughtsman in ink and wash he could be delightfully evocative and often whimsical, as well. Only as a painter in oils or fresco was Kent third-rate, and as a writer he was, to judge by his surviving letters, barely literate.

In noting Margaret Jourdain's book in the TLS (November 4, 1949), the anonymous reviewer complained that "after reading this account of Kent's life, we are no nearer to him as a person". From Michael Wilson's book there does emerge an engaging image of a genial and gregarious character who endeared himself to his aristocratic patrons without losing to them, whose conversation was as free as those entertaining doodles which often survive his architectural drawings, and whose private life concealed nothing more reprehensible than an established mistress and two *petes* of his neighbours. The process culminated in the fateful year 1983 when, with its financial world collapsing, Venezuela continued to spend in style, opening a new airport, importing Scotch whisky, hosting international congresses, staging a bicentenary worthy of the Liberator, and holding a decisive election. Was 1983 the last year of the old régime? Ewell will tell.

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craftsmen who carried out Kent's designs", and in Wilson's there is still no discussion of that "familiar network" of masons, carvers, joiners and other artisans of which Thompson gives an instructive glimpse in the context of the house Kent designed for Henry Pelham in Arlington Street.

If the world in which William Kent operated is inadequately sketched by Wilson, he does give a competent enough account of Kent's principal commissions as painter, architect and landscape-gardener, from the ceiling in the church of S. Giuliano dei Fiamminghi in Rome (splendidly illustrated by a colour plate in *A House in Town*), executed in 1717, to the garden at Rousham, laid out in the 1730s, or the Worcester Lodge at Badminton, a work of the 1740s. On Kent as a painter he is very much more instructive than Jourdain, pointing out that although Kent's decorative paintings may

ter the didactic surfeit of Stowe one could wander round one of Capability's landscape parks with a visual pleasure unalloyed by moral, social or political comment. Nature herself had taken over as the presiding genius of the place, and garden buildings had become no more than vantage points from which to admire her beauties. To what extent this was true of the Kentian garden remains to be seen. At Stowe, (where Kent was responsible for Temples of Ancient and Modern Virtue), the choice, Wilson assures us, "was certainly not Kent's own". That would be consistent with Watkin's picture of Kent as "non-doctrinal and non-intellectual". But was Rousham as inconsequential a sequence of views as the head gardener's itinerary (recently printed by Mavis Batey) might suggest? Was he placing those classical properties ("a Bacchus drunk Lead between two Satyrs, Demosthenes setting



A detail of William Kent's ceiling above the King's Staircase in Kensington Place (before restoration). In the painting "Whodun" Kent himself, florid-faced and quizzical, holding his palette, is second from the right. It is reproduced from Michael I. Wilson's book, reviewed on this page.

have been baroque in composition, he did not display them in a baroque manner, confining them to framed compartments, and subordinating them to architectural elements which, however rich, were generally "Palladian" rather than baroque in character. At Kensington Palace as early as 1722 he simulated a coffered ceiling that anticipates by over forty years the one above J. D. Antoine's celebrated staircase in the Hôtel des Moines in Paris, and in Berkeley Square and Arlington Street in the 1740s he produced *tour-de-force* of decorative coffering that invite comparison with Renaissance *grotesche* rather than with anything baroque. Nevertheless Kent's Roman training had given him a sense of three-dimensional movement in space that abated him in good stead both as an architect and as a garden designer, and anyone who has seen the theatrical staircase at 44 Berkeley Square will have difficulty in deciding whether Kent should not after all be classified as a baroque architect. There is indeed a stylistic ambivalence in Kent's work which is amusingly illustrated in *A House in Town*, where one contributor describes Kent's Wakefield Lodge as "a final essay in Baroque", while another, by an instructive juxtaposition of illustrations, shows how it anticipates sparsely decorated European, Neo-classical buildings like Peyre's Hôtel de Neuborg. The stylistic paradox in Kent's work is neatly resolved by David Watkin who (in the same book) observes that the Temple at Euston Hall, and the Worcester Lodge at Badminton "have a sense of energy just held in restraint and seem to embody a perfect balance between the opposing tensions of Baroque and Palladianism".

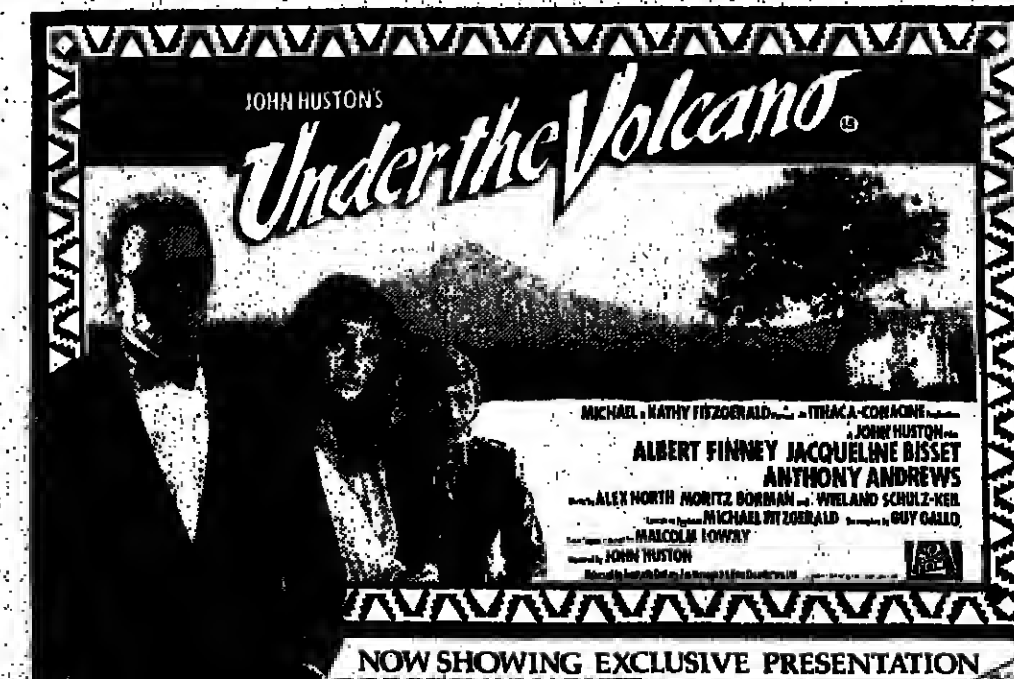
If Kent was an architect who tempered Palladian dogma with baroque invention, as a landscape-gardener he also occupies an intermediate position: he stands midway between the programmatic *jardin à clef* and the purely visual experience offered by the English land-

scape. Not only does it illustrate the social and architectural vicissitudes of 22 Arlington Street more lavishly than has been done for any other house in London, it also provides almost as complete a photographic coverage of Kent's other architectural works as Wilson's book, and helps to make good one serious deficiency of the latter, a total absence of plans, whether of buildings or gardens. Both books, however, must be censured for failing to state in the captions the sources of paintings, drawings and engravings reproduced. Owner and photographer are sometimes confounded in one long and confusing list of acknowledgments which may satisfy the law of copyright, but certainly does not satisfy either the legitimate curiosity of the reader or the serious need of the scholar to establish the credentials of what he is looking at. It is time this slovenly practice was as sternly proscribed as the failure to provide a proper index, something fortunately that is not lacking in either of the books under review.

Meanwhile Michael Wilson's book takes the place of Margaret Jourdain's as the current work on William Kent. It is fair to say that it seeks to consolidate existing information rather than to extend it by fresh research. This is no ground for complaint, but before Wilson revived the story of a second visit to Italy in

1730 one might have expected him to consult the minutes of the Board of Works to see whether Kent was absent from his post in Whitehall or not; and the precaution of checking her source (a sale of drawings in 1971) would have saved him from repeating Barbara Jones's misattribution to Kent of the Gothic eye-catcher at Shotover. Then the transcription from Kent's letters to Burrell Massingberd (the principal source for his early life) is not as accurate as scholarly practice would expect, some words being interpolated and others omitted without notice. These textual discrepancies are mostly of no account, but the startling suggestion that in 1715 the young Kent was already holding one-man shows in Rome proves to be due to a misreading of the word "the" as "my". It was merely to "the next shew of pictures here" that Kent proposed to send a "Holy Family" he had painted. The dating of these letters presents some problems. Kent was a careless correspondent and he sometimes dated his letters by the Old Style, sometimes by the New, and sometimes by both. A letter dated "Jan; 30 1720" must surely have been written on January 30, 1720/1, for in it Kent refers to the impending marriage of Lord Burlington to Lady Dorothy Savile, which took place on March 21, 1720/1. By dating it January 30, 1719/20, Wilson not only obliges himself to explain away Kent's reference to "the Opera" (of which none was performed in London during the winter of 1719-20), but also draws the premature conclusion that at that early date Kent was already fully established in Burlington's household and turning his attention to architecture.

A House in Town is remarkable as a book sponsored by a public company in a manner common in Italy but rare in this country. Although ostensibly the history of a single house, 22 Arlington Street, designed by Kent for Henry Pelham in the 1740s, and recently restored to something like its original splendour by its present owners, the Eagle Star Insurance Company, it also contains an admirable introductory essay on Kent by David Watkin and the study of the Pelhams' political and architectural patronage already mentioned. Not only does it illustrate the social and architectural vicissitudes of 22 Arlington Street more lavishly than has been done for any other house in London, it also provides almost as complete a photographic coverage of Kent's other architectural works as Wilson's book, and helps to make good one serious deficiency of the latter, a total absence of plans, whether of buildings or gardens. Both books, however, must be censured for failing to state in the captions the sources of paintings, drawings and engravings reproduced. Owner and photographer are sometimes confounded in one long and confusing list of acknowledgments which may satisfy the law of copyright, but certainly does not satisfy either the legitimate curiosity of the reader or the serious need of the scholar to establish the credentials of what he is looking at. It is time this slovenly practice was as sternly proscribed as the failure to provide a proper index, something fortunately that is not lacking in either of the books under review.



NOW SHOWING EXCLUSIVE PRESENTATION

John Huston

Behind the lines

Robert Hewison

Officials at the Treasury will neither confirm nor deny that a feasibility study is being carried out on charging VAT on books, newspapers and periodicals. This is the closest anyone can get to substantiating the rumour that has been worrying the book trade since early July. It is known that the government wishes to shift its revenue sources from direct to indirect taxation, and all zero-rated items, from children's shees to food, must be considered at risk.

The book trade is taking the possibility of VAT being imposed in the April 1985 budget very seriously indeed. The National Book Committee, which represents all aspects of writing and publishing, is preparing a broad cultural campaign, but already a sub-committee drawn from business interests most in danger has started work on the research needed to counter the fiscal arguments for a tax on books. The sub-committee's chairman, the publisher Viscount Macmillan, has spoken of the need for a £100,000 campaign against the proposal.

It is estimated that VAT at 15 per cent would raise about £85 million a year. Some institutional buyers such as public libraries and local authorities would probably be exempt, but it would be difficult to discriminate between classes of titles so as to protect educational books. Publishers and booksellers argue that we are not simply facing an extra 15 per cent on prices: the tax is self-administered, and while large business could cope with additional administration costs, small publishers and booksellers would go to the wall. Sales would decline, print runs would be shortened, and the overall price of books would rise in consequence, further driving down sales.

But will the tax be imposed? At present it is only a nasty rumour, and the trade is adept at protecting its interests. It has been in danger before: purchase tax was warded off in 1941; Selective Employment Tax in the 1960s, and VAT when the tax first appeared. Each time the cultural argument against "a tax on knowledge" has won the day. It is possible that the government would not wish to face a protest on a much bigger scale than that against Mr Heath's museum charges, for a mere £85 million.

The EEC translators' scheme

Michele Field

Less than 3 per cent of the books published in Great Britain last year were translated from other languages. This is largely the fault of publishers who lack the resources to keep up with the best of what is being written abroad. But it is also true that the extra cost of translating a book has deterred publishers, as has the risk a publisher must run that the translation he has commissioned will prove to be unreliable or unreadable.

The EEC has made its only subsidy to publishers and authors in this sticky area. The scheme was mooted in 1980 when Lord Bethell, member of the European Parliament for London North-West and translator of Solzhenitsyn's *Cancer Ward*, proposed to Roy Jenkins that publishers who translated books in the languages of the European community and also offered their translators fair contracts should be reimbursed 50 per cent of the translator's fee. In 1982 money was available, £20,000 a year – although among British publishers only John Calder tapped this source, publishing several French novels in English.

But the subsidy was badly publicized and administered, so this year it was given to the OEIC, the European publishers' group, to supervise. It has been enlarged with a further £50,000 a year for translations of scientific and technical works by living authors, and it has been strangled by a rule that the previous £20,000 subsidy be exclusively for Dutch, Greek or Danish fiction translated into a major European language. In coming years, it is assumed, translators and authors of books in other EEC minority languages will be the recipients.

Twenty-four British publishers submitted titles for subsidy before the deadline of June 30. But they did so vaguely. The rules say that grants will be for 50 per cent of the cost of a

The major campaign against the threatened tax will not be fought until the autumn, when MPs return from their holidays, and the lobbying begins. It is a campaign that the trade has to win, if only by chasing away a begy that never was. Zero-rating on books is a precious privilege, both cultural and economic. So is the net book agreement. If it is logical to put VAT on books, it would be logical to remove that protection also.

Members of the Arts Council's Literature Panel can expect to see a niggling item on the agenda for their quarterly meeting in September: a report on the unusually public row that has been going between the Literature Director, Charles Osborne and the Poetry Society, over the affairs of the Poetry Book Society.

In June the Poetry Book Society – which sends selected poetry publications to members – moved its address from the Arts Council to the Poetry Society. The Poetry Society had been run highly successfully since 1954 from within the Arts Council, but in the recent shake-up it was decided that it was inappropriate to administer a client in this way. Accordingly, the management of the PBS looked for a new home, and accepted the Poetry Society's offer to supply – for a fee – the administrative services once provided by the Arts Council. All seemed well: the Poetry Book Society under its new chairman Blake Morrison was in expansive mood, it had expectations of reasonable funding, and it had built up a reserve of £12,000, which was being used to reverse a slight decline in membership.

Unfortunately, once the change of address was made, these happy expectations were not fulfilled. Instead of an anticipated grant of £14,000 to help meet the new costs being incurred, the Poetry Book Society was allocated only £10,000, and told to make up the rest from its reserves. The PBS quietly appealed against this decision, while the Poetry Society launched a public attack on Charles Osborne. They said that they had been "grossly misled" about the Poetry Book Society's level of funding, and accused Osborne of not telling either of them that the grant would only be £10,000 – as he knew full well – until it was too late to question the changeover. Rarely has an Arts Council client so firmly bitten the hand that feeds it.

Charles Osborne's reply to the Poetry Society's charges is that first of all, the affairs of the PBS are nothing to do with them. Secondly, while indeed there was a recommendation that the grant should only be £10,000 well before the handover, the Council's final decision was not made until much later. (My researches indicate the recommendation was Osborne's own.) Their accusations, he says, are "highly disingenuous stuff", and there was never any firm commitment to £14,000.

The Poetry Book Society's appeal, meanwhile, has been rejected. This decision was not discussed by the Literature Advisory Panel, but was taken "at officer level". Osborne rests his case on the existence of the PBS reserves. It is the Arts Council's policy not to allow clients "to sit on large deposits" (even if, as until recently secretary of the PBS, Osborne himself did so). The PBS must spend its own money, before coming to the Arts Council for more.

The Poetry Book Society is now joining the Poetry Society in openly criticizing the decision. Blake Morrison says "the Arts Council has betrayed a clear understanding, and we intend to fight. We have been shoddily treated." Their only hope seems to be to get a much bigger grant next year. The Poetry Society estimates at least £20,000 is needed. Osborne says that this year's £10,000 does not mean there won't be more next year, it could be at least £14,000, which would be easier to grant if the PBS reserves are fully committed. It remains to be seen if the Literature Panel has anything to say about the bitterness that has been engendered, or can do anything about it.

When in June "Behind the lines" asked the Director of the British Council's Literature Unit, Ken Churchill, if the Unit might not be in danger of disappearing, he replied that it was not. But it does seem to be getting smaller all the time. The management of the British Council has proposed that two of the six posts in the Literature Unit be suppressed, that of the literature publications editor, and her assistant. Negotiations are currently going on with the unions concerned.

Not only will this reduce the staff of the Literature Unit by a third, it will mean the end of the British Council's direct involvement in literature as publishers. A back-list of their

series like Writers and their Work will remain, but seems likely to go out of print. The Council has already reduced its involvement by using its staff to set up projected series, and then making a deal for their publication by a commercial firm. Presumably there will no longer be anyone left to do this work. No new work will be commissioned, and it remains to be seen what will happen to manuscript commissioned for current series like Notes on Literature, delivered but as yet unpublished.

The British Council management is adamant that the suppression of two mere posts in the Literature Unit – which has yet to be agreed, and is therefore only a proposal – does not mean a diminution in the Council's commitment to literature. But they won't say what will replace this demoralizing loss of personnel, or how fewer people in the Unit means a better deal for literature.

The National Book League and the Society of Authors have just published their latest *Guide to Literary Prizes, Grants and Awards* (42pp, £2.25, 0 85353 384 9). The fact that this, the third edition, comes so quickly after the 1982 *Guide* shows the speed with which the prize game is expanding. Awards are worth more, and there are more of them. The Booker Prize now stands at £15,000, but the Betty Trask offers £12,500 as a first prize, plus up to five £1,000. The Society's editor, Sue Bennett, says there is no shortage of people interested in funding literary prizes. The Crime Writers' Association awards, for instance, are currently sponsored by Securicor.

Nor is there any shortage of people looking for prize money. The Sinclair Prize, which is administered by the NBL, offers £5,000 plus possible publication for "an unpublished novel with great literary merit and social or political significance". In the first year it attracted 150 entries, last year 200, and 300 this. Clearly the (unpublished) novel is not dead.

Some prizes are more modest: a brass docket for the Dorothy Tutin Award for poetry, a bronze egg and £200 for the Mother Goose Award, a golden dagger and £1,000 for giant writing, a silver pen and a cheque from PEN. I am curious to know who wins the £200 Arthur Markham Memorial Prize next year. Candidates must be manual workers at a coal mine or have been injured when so employed.

The periodicals, 22: Aquarius

Fleur Adcock

EDDIE S. LINDEN (Editor) and MARK O'CONNOR (Guest Editor)
Aquarius
15/16: A special Australian edition, plus new Irish poetry and general section
144pp. Eddie S. Linden, Flat 3, 114 Sutherland Avenue, London W9. £2.50.

With no literary background and little education Eddie Linden was no unlikely host for a literary magazine. But single-minded persistence and a talent for persuasion have seen him and *Aquarius* through fifteen years of more or less annual issues. From the start he has had a group of advisory editors, including as assistant editor John Heath-Stubbs.

Early issues were crudely produced but respectably furnished with work from recognized names. The range was eclectic: "We shall continue to resist takeover bids from . . . groups, the magazine soon took the sensible course of devoting separate issues to local literatures (Irish, Welsh, Scottish, Canadian) or to individual poets it wished to commemorate or honour. With increasing maturity, *Aquarius* lost both its amateurish format and some (not all) of its innocence. The ninth issue (1977) was the first to be professionally typeset and the last to carry a battling editorial: "There is no need to stress the incredible and disgraceful state of affairs into which the Patronage of English Literature may sink." Since then the tone has become, if not tame, conspicuously more subdued.

The current issue shows little evidence of the magazine's origins or the personality of its editor. It opens with acknowledgments to a bevy of sponsors including the Australian, Irish and Northern Irish Arts Councils. There follow so

ry by the guest editor, Mark O'Connor, a short piece on the same topic by Peter Porter, and about thirty fairly representative pages of the product itself, some of it previously published in Australia but new here and well worth bringing. The Irish section could also serve as a case of samples for transmission overseas, with poems by Heaney, Mahon, McGuckian, Muldoon, Simmons, Durcan and ni Chuilleanáin among others; Longley is missing, but Montague and Paulin have squeezed out token contributions (of six and four lines respectively). The "general section" is less uniformly well-powered; the freshest note among this worthy but not unpredictable batch is sounded in a gritty, melancholy ballad by Carol Rumens.

It is the short, fragmentary and ill-balanced reviews section, though, which reinforces any doubts one may have about *Aquarius*. All the recent issues have been well produced and studded with interesting things, but the magazine itself is curiously characterless. There are several explanations for this: its infrequency; its tendency to go in for guest-edited special issues rather than to keep a finger on any particular pulse; its lack of editorial bite; and, underlying all these, the fact that it is so evidently the product of a committee. That *Aquarius* has lasted so long bears witness to Eddie Linden's ability to inspire affection and loyalty in his contributors; and he deserves honour for this; but a magazine needs a personality of its own.

Macmillan, London, have launched a *T. S. Eliot Annual*, as a part of their *Literary Classics* series. Its editor, Sriyalal Bagoche, Department of English, The University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2E1, invites submissions of critical and scholarly essays for consideration. Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the directions in the 1977 edition of the *MLA Handbook*.

Letters

Conflict in Cyprus

Sir, – In criticizing my review of Christopher Hitchens's *Cyprus*, C.J. Holland (Letters, August 17) gives a different version from Hitchens of an episode in August 1964. He implies that he could do the same in other instances.

Of course he could. There are rival versions of every episode in Cypriot history for the last twenty-five years. In the case of the 1964 episode, Hitchens can find, if he wishes, yet another version in Stanley Mayes's *Makarios: A biography*.

None of this invalidates the central thesis of Hitchens's book, which Holland ignores: that the principal blame for the tragedy of Cyprus lay not with the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, but with the actions and inactions of foreign powers – Greek, Turkish, British and American. With the reservation mentioned in my review, I think that is correct.

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Editing Yeats

Sir, – Although A. Norman Jeffares (Letters, August 10) remains absolutely certain of Mrs Yeats's "constant desire to carry out his [Yeats's] wishes about his work", he has no choice but to admit that she made a "mistake" in agreeing to Thomas Mark's request for a rearrangement of *Last Poems* contrary to Yeats's known plan. Yet he sees no discrepancy between being aware of that decision as well as of her other understandable uncertainties about Yeats's texts and at the same time accepting without question her view that Yeats preferred a quasi-chronological arrangement for his poems (throughout this debate, "chronological" has been a misnomer, as "The Wanderings of Oisín" was neither Yeats's first written nor first published poem). Jeffares snr. Warwick Gould (Letters, August 10) cling to their belief despite the fact that Yeats's only recorded statement on the topic expresses his "delight" at the two-part arrangement. Indeed, to maintain his position Jeffares is forced to offer the hypothesis that Mrs Yeats's "reported views about the arrangement of *Poems* (1949) dealt probably with the 'Narrative and Dramatic' section's poems", even though (as I noted in *Editing Yeats's Poems*) the late Russell K. Aispech wrote me that "Mrs Yeats assured me in conversation that the 1949 two-volume edition fully warranted the word 'definitive': that WB had corrected the proof and arranged the poems in the order he wanted", there being no modifier before "poems".

Jeffares and Gould make much of the nine-page typed document headed "W. B. YEATS / DE LUXE EDITION", misdated June 5, 1937, by Jeffares in his *New Commentary* but more correctly described by Gould as produced to "the autumn of 1936" (in fact, 1st October/early November) and further annotated to "the middle of June 1937" (in fact, c. June 7). I am glad of the opportunity to comment on this document, as its significance is not at all what Jeffares and Gould would have us believe.

First, on the matter of the order of the plays, in his review (June 29) Gould states that "In 1937 Yeats emphasized that chronological ordering was to be retained for EDL Plays". In his letter he still has the wrong date but admits that Yeats's "Print them chronologically" applies not to all the plays in the volume but rather only to those in *Wheels and Butterflies*. What he does not say is that Thomas Mark (no less) had placed the Sophocles translations before *Wheels and Butterflies*. Since all the plays in that collection were both written and published before *Gedipus at Colonus*, Yeats's instruction results in the following arrangement of his later plays for Volume IV of the Edition de Luxe. I cite the dates from the list which Mrs Yeats, correctly executing Yeats's wishes, prepared from the 1936/37 document: *Gedipus at Colonus* (1934), *The Cat and the Moon* (1917), *Fighting the Waves* (1929), *Words upon the Window-pane* (1930), *The Resurrection* (1931), *The King of the Great Clock Tower* (1934), *The [sic] Full Moon in the Sky* (1935), and *The Herne's Egg* (1936).

Second, the page 36 of the 1936/37 document everything that is in the one-volume 'Collected Poems' except those listed below" and asks "are we to add" "Fragments", "The Fool by the Roadside", and "The Choice". "Fragments" was absent from the Edition de Luxe proofs because it was first published in *Collected Poems*. "The Fool by the Roadside" was in fact present on the proofs, as the last ten lines of "The Hero, the Girl, and the Fool"; but for *Collected Poems* Yeats had used the shorter version. Likewise, "The Choice" was on the proofs, as the sixth stanza of "Coele and Ballylee, 1931". Yeats had deleted it and published it separately in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* and also in *Collected Poems*.

Yeats's 1936 reply to Mark's query is simply "Yes". Simply put, that response makes no sense whatsoever if Yeats realized that the publishers were not following their standard policy of adopting the latest revised text for a new edition but were instead using the earlier proofs. Not only would eighteen lines of verse have been printed twice, but Macmillan would have had no notion as to where to put "Fragments" (indeed, the placement of the work in the 1949 *Poems* results in a contents and order for *The Tower* that quite lacks Yeats's authority). It thus seems likely that Yeats's "Yes" was based on the logical assumption that *Collected Poems* had now become the standard text: after all, he had not only expressed "delight" with its arrangement but also made for it changes in contents and order as well as numerous verbal revisions. It should also be noted that Yeats is not reminded on the 1936/37 document of the different arrangement of the proofs – proofs which he had not seen for several years, in the interval copies of *Collected Poems* being easily to hand.

In short, Jeffares and Gould would have us believe that in 1936 Yeats was ready to foist on many of his devoted American readers (some of whom had recently formed a "Testimonial Committee" to guarantee him a lifetime sinecure) an elaborate edition of his poems in an inferior arrangement, all the while keeping the proper scheme a closely held secret, to be revealed only after his death – and then to be only fully available to the 350 buyers of the Edition de Luxe, the rest of the world having to content itself with a "stop-gap" *Collected Poems*. (For further details, let me refer interested readers to an essay on "The Order of Yeats's Poems", to be published in the Autumn 1984 issue of the *Irish University Review*.)

As for Gould's other points, I am glad that he now distinguishes between *A Full Moon in March* (1935) and *New Poems* (1938) but sorry that he finds nothing wrong with, for instance, his misleading statement about my failure to offer any "evidence" about the Scribner Archive. I was not unaware of the provisional title "Poems 1933-1937", had Yeats died directly after using it instead of proceeding to publish *New Poems* and to write further lyrics, I certainly would have adopted it. Gould is also imprecise when he refers to "the agreed procedure whereby the EDL would absorb any new materials from the Scribner Edition", as Mrs Yeats explained to Harold Macmillan in a letter of June 7, 1939, "The prefaces you refer to, and the General Introduction were written by WB for the exclusive use of the Scribner edition . . .". Finally, Gould seems to have forgotten that the editorial policy for the new *Collected Edition* was agreed upon some time ago after extended discussions, many of them in the halls of the British Library (I have not been so "distant" from the Macmillan Archive or the apple-barn in Birch Grove as he suggests). The eleven other editors are at work. If he now finds it difficult to proceed according to the editorial policy or under the direction of the General Editors, I am afraid there is little we can do to help him.

To his interesting letter of July 20, Denis Donoghue objects that the new edition includes "silent emendations". However, there are none. All emendations to the copy-texts are listed in the Textual Notes (pp 713-17); most of them are also explained in *Editing Yeats's Poems*. There are of course differences between the new edition and previous texts of Yeats's poetry; but (aside from the two misprints cited in my letter of August 3) they result from the choice of copy-texts, as listed on pp 713-17.

That route is barred to steamers: you'll never lift again Our purple-painted headlands, or the lordly keeps of Spain. They're just beyond your skyline, however so for you crylie In a ram-yo-dam-yo liner with n'brace of bucking screws. Her crews are babes or madmen? Her pon is all to make? You're manned by Truth and Science, and you steam for steaming's sake? Well,inker up your engines – you know your business best – She's taking tired people to the Islands of the Blest!

Adolescent fantasy? Perhaps. But I am reminded of Kipling's verses in praise of the old three-decker novel, "the only certain pocket for the Islands of the Blest".

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June 8) that "in a work of this scale and ambition nothing short of perfection is acceptable", I agree that two misprints are indeed two too many. I hope there are no more. But as editors are human and inhabit a fallible world (perhaps nowhere better illustrated than by the printer's errors unique to the English text), and as the edition contains almost 600 pages of poems, my hope may be in vain.

I also share Denegue's view that "Reprisals" is "a far better poem" than some included in the new edition. But the fact remains that Yeats neither published it in his lifetime nor was planning to publish it when he died. To include it would be to open the edition to numerous unpublished works, ranging from "The Watch-Fire" to "Peem of Lancelot Switchback". In my view the proper place for such unpublished works is the Cornell Yeats, where they will be included in the appropriate volumes of poem manuscripts.

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French Intellectual Traditions

Sir, – In his review of recent works on the French Revolution (August 3), William Scott alludes to a "long-standing" division between the Marxists and their critics. He places the latter among those "who, following the right-wing tradition of being 'above politics' proclaim their allegiance to eternal values, in this case those of objective scholarship".

Proclaiming "allegiance to eternal values" is not a right-wing tradition of long standing in France. During the Dreyfus years right-wing intellectuals opposed those who invoked "eternal", "objective" standards of justice thereby provoking left-wing accusations of committing a "Irishish des clerics".

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'Valentine Pontifex'

Sir, – Colin Greenland's review (August 3) of *Valentine Pontifex*, the third (not the second) volume of Robert Silverberg's *Chronicles of Majipoor*, suggests that he shares the weird belief that books ending in confusion or despair are to be preferred to ones ending in a new reconciliation. I see no reason why I should read fiction in order to be depressed.

Silverberg has used the familiar motif of a huge planet, populated by various disparate but convivial races and threatened by internal discord, to present a myth of personal and political growth. It is, of course, a very American myth: Majipoor is an enormously extended and idealized America, ruled by a dream of personal liberty conjoined with convivial appreciation of one's fellow-citizens and the natural world, marred by an unacknowledged assault upon the original inhabitants, and the complacency of its ruling classes. Salvation comes through repentance and a new recognition of the divine as it is embodied in the vast herds of sea-dragons that tour the unknown oceans of the planet. Majipoor survives because its citizens are kept aware of their own guilts and confusions (already explored in the second volume, *Majipoor: Chronicles* through the eyes of a minor clerk and future Coronal), and prefer the ways of friendship to the ruses of war.

Adolescent fantasy? Perhaps. But I am reminded of Kipling's verses in praise of the old three-decker novel, "the only certain pocket for the Islands of the Blest".

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'Jewish Life in the Middle Ages'

Sir, – David Goldstein's review of our book *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (April 13) has only recently come to our notice. It is so misinformed and misleading that it requires a reply even at this late stage.

1) It was most unfair to review the American edition and not the original French book without even hinting at the latter, when Goldstein had been personally informed that this edition is so careless and the translation at times makes such nonsense of our original text that it was published against our express wishes. If the illustrations, which Goldstein praises, are of high quality, this was because the authors chose all of them and supervised the lay-out and colour. It would have been only fair to credit them at least with a share in the result.

2) Decoration was not confined to medieval Hebrew books only "for use at home". Richly decorated and illustrated prayer-books were used in the synagogue.

3) It was no "slip of the pen" to say that the *shema* is recited three times a day. Pious Jews, then and now, recite the *shema*, not twice a day, as Goldstein says, but at morning and evening prayer and again before going to sleep.

4) Goldstein claims that we might mislead the reader into thinking that the illuminators of the pigeon and the fishes intended to depict *kasher* animals. The captions and the context make it clear that the intention to illustrate the Jewish diet was entirely ours. But, like every medieval Jew whose life was guided by religious laws, our Jewish illuminators were no doubt at once aware of the "cleanness" of any animal they happened to see.

5) It should not have surprised Goldstein to see "a naked woman, which illustrates the symbol of Jerusalem", accompanied by a caption referring to the status of poverty, since the figure in question is neither a naked woman nor a symbol of Jerusalem. The painter has departed from what is found in the few other *haggadol* where Ezekiel 16.7 is illustrated by showing not a woman but a bearded and opacated man, wearing the article of underclothing worn only by men in medieval painting and obviously symbolizing the people of Israel in its most pathetic bareness. This point was fully discussed in the work by Mendel Metzger to which Goldstein refers. Had he read it, he would not have accused us of a "deliberate wrenching" of this image "out of context" to suit our purpose.

6) Why is it "no consolation" to find us admitting that we sometimes make a picture say what it did not intend to say? Our enterprise was based on a clearly stated premise: although almost invariably concerned with Biblical and liturgical texts and never with everyday life, images in Jewish manuscripts can nevertheless, as anyone familiar with medieval art would guess, illustrate medieval Jewish life and customs. Goldstein's concept of "anachronism" simply does not apply in medieval art. The illustration we use to show a Jewish image of Christ as king in Spain – an image of Pharaoh listening to his counselors advising him to expel the Children of Israel – was not an "anachronism" to the medieval Jew, who naturally identified any king who adopted an anti-Jewish policy as the Pharaoh "who knew not Joseph".

7) Goldstein criticizes our tentative identification of a building shown in a manuscript in the British Library as a school or a synagogue on the ground that it has recently been identified by Juergen Erdmann as the earliest extant representation of the *Veste Coburg*. But Erdmann's identification of our building (not, as Goldstein attests, with the *Veste Coburg* but with the *Hohe Haus* inside) is a mere hypothesis and, as the author himself admits, a very venturesome one. Without going into this suggestion in detail, it should be said that while the miniature cannot be later than the end of the fourteenth century, the *Hohes Haus* is generally dated to the second half of the fifteenth.

It is outrageous of Goldstein to claim that our use of these illustrations "savours of doubtful practice".

THESESE METZGER.
MENDEL METZGER.
17 rue Beethoven, F-67000 Strasbourg, France.

The absolutely deprived

Michael Lipton

PAUL STREETEN and others
First Things First: Meeting basic human needs in the developing countries
206pp. Oxford University Press. £10 (paperback, £3.95).
0 19 520368 2
PAUL STREETEN
Development Perspectives
449pp. Macmillan. £25.
0 333 285 670

Development Perspectives is a series of papers dating mostly from the late 1970s, aimed in large part at clarifying the recent intellectual history of economists' approaches to the problem of poverty in less-developed countries. *First Things First*, written mainly by the same author but with support from three World Bank staff members (Javed Burki, Norman Hicks and Mahbub ul-Haq) and a consultant (Frances Stewart), summarizes the goals, measurement issues, and lessons from country and sector experience that have emerged from the growing concern, in the Bank elsewhere, with policies to define, track, and meet "basic needs". The second book overlaps substantially with Part Four of the first.

Together the books comprise a welcome rejoinder, in the field of development studies, to what Orwell termed "the snelly little orthodoxes now contending for our souls": the old (that, in the absence of implausible revolutions, the poor can hardly ever benefit even from rapid economic growth); the new (that only misguided price policies and excessive State intervention cause poverty to persist); and the pervasive (that the rich world's social scientists – and politicians – should cultivate their gardens, and leave the less-developed world alone). It is this last orthodoxy, with its lack of intellectual curiosity, that would most have shocked the classical economists from Adam Smith to Marx.

Yet it was the orthodoxy of, say, 1880–1945. It was only after the Second World War that the economics of poor countries returned to the forefront of analysis in the rich world. There were several reasons: the growth of the UN system, of pressures towards decolonization, of neo-Keynesian confidence in demand management of Western economies; and of a sense that, analogously, supply management of Third World economies might produce similar improvements. As Paul Streeten writes, "There was a new awareness that poverty is not the inevitable fate of the majority of mankind. It is not easy to convey, in the present atmosphere of gloom and indifference surrounding development problems, what an exciting time of ferment these early years were." The renewed obsession of the rich world's politicians with local issues, in the wake of the economic failures of the 1970s, is understandable; a retreat by the Euro-Atlantic economists of the 1980s into their own (back) gardens would be much less so.

The growth record of Latin America, South and East Asia, and until 1973 parts of Africa, seemed fully to justify the new economics of hope. Nor was it all just expansion of output: literacy and life-expectancy, reflecting widespread access to social resources, rose sharply too. Yet poor people's private incomes – their capacity to command adequate food and shelter – often stagnated amid rapid growth (nutritional and other evidence is well presented in these books). Hence, from the early 1970s, development economists began to explore the circumstances under which growth in poor countries might lead to widespread increases in what Robert McNamara, at the World Bank, termed "the productivity of the poor" – or in the satisfaction of "basic needs". The two are not quite the same (even unproductive, ill people have basic needs), but a policy to advance one normally advances the other.

Development economics – like all "new" subjects? – has been prone to swings of fashion: non-formal education today, intermediate technology tomorrow. . . . Surely, however, the attempt to analyse how policies affect poverty is more than a fashion. It is based on the realization that growth may not

poor). In Western European "industrial revolutions", twenty to fifty years of near-stagnant working-class welfare typically gave way – as demand for labour, and organization by workers, advanced – to more widely shared growth. But the hopes of analogous "trickle-down" in today's Third World are dubious. There, populations of poor workers are growing much faster than in nineteenth-century Europe. These people face increasing scarcity of good land (even in much of Africa). Also, they are largely isolated from the semi-skilled leadership that so advanced the nineteenth-century European poor. The Third World's poor are still largely dispersed rural masses, not organized working-class movements.

Yet, although labour supply and demand (and dispersion) do not favour the rapid alleviation of poverty even in many rapidly growing poor countries, there is, as A.O. Hirschman has pointed out, "diminishing tolerance for inequality", or at least for persistent poverty amidst growing affluence in one country. Of course, that country's affluent people are mostly tolerant; but dissidents and donors are not.

Nor are the increasingly literate poor people of the Third World. Emphasis on the reduction of poverty, well analysed in these books, is thus unlikely to be reduced by attempts to persuade people to expect less from governments. Most poor people can hear (if not own) a transistor radio. They will not accept a revolution of falling expectations. The principle of focusing on poverty, recently endorsed very publicly by the World Bank in President Clausen's speeches following the publication of *Focus on Poverty*, is largely immune to ideological fashion. But its practice is very vulnerable to class and group interest. As a subject of study, it is here to stay; but as a guide to policy, can it work?

The answer depends on four main issues, all handled interestingly by Streeten. First, can "basic needs" be measured and defined in a way that enables policies to be targeted on the needy? Second, can need be linked to economic demand? Third, can the cost of meeting need, especially the cost to the powerful, be contained? Finally, what is the relationship between meeting needs and achieving growth and development?

Streeten, despite some concessions, largely (and rightly) rejects the notion of relative poverty. In favour of identifying a "core of absolute deprivation... determined by medical and psychological criteria". Until that core is removed, the reduction of relative poverty is a (non-Rawlsian) philosopher's luxury. Indeed, if poverty is relative to a nation's average level, eliminating it is rather like "catching the electric hare used to spur on greyhounds at dog races". But how is the core to be measured, so that policies can concentrate on the places and characteristics most strongly linked to it?

We cannot just measure the average income among all persons living in a particular area or with a particular characteristic. That is to ignore the possibility that some areas, say, with very low average income might distribute it very equally. What about looking at the number of persons in households below a cut-off level of income per head? Even that, Streeten warns us, involves traps: that "some basic needs can be satisfied [best] through public services"; that "consumers . . . are not always efficient"; that "additional income is earned" in ways that "may affect nutrition adversely"; and that households maldistribute resources against women and children. However, these suspicions of the income measure go too far. Certainly, it is socially inefficient for some needs to be supplied privately, but the value of public provision can be included in personal income estimates. Streeten's other objections may well, on recent evidence, overestimate inefficiency, error and bias within hardpressed poor households. They must be competent and fair to survive extreme poverty.

Three serious objections to an income measure of need, due to A. K. Sen, are briefly considered by Streeten. First, length of expected life, not just average income during it, determines economic welfare. So, second, do non-income entitlements – claims on both pub-

lic and economic entitlements into welfare – some Japanese farmworkers are almost twice as efficient as others in transforming food into activity (without harm or weight loss), and food typically represents about three-quarters of very poor people's incomes.

Economists (and biophysicists) may develop ways to handle these issues in an improved income-welfare measure. In the meantime, fortunately, there is great ostensive overlap between the definitions of poverty. They point, if not to the identical persons in a given region, at least to very similar numbers of persons. Income per person, calorie intake relative to requirements, proportion of income spent on non-food items, expectation of healthy life, probably even literacy – each attribute of poor people appears to rank areas (and characteristics) similarly in respect of the risk that poverty will be linked to them, and indeed to identify similar proportions, in each main group of persons, below an ultra-poverty line at which conditions worsen sharply. Individuals identified are not the same, but the priority implied (in, say, regional planning, or pricing) to a fight against poverty is. To a great extent, one can pick the indicator of poverty that is easiest to measure reliably, and use it – with care – as a guide to the incidence of other indicators. Certainly this is better, practically and conceptually, than constructing inevitably arbitrary "quality-of-life indicators", or even core "basic needs".

An adjusted income target probably makes most sense in anti-poverty policy. Such a target assumes that households almost always do meet "basic needs" when income and other "entitlements" per person (allowing for age composition) suffice to obtain food and other essentials. This target has the great advantage of linking needs to demands, through the normal assumption that people, especially in very poor households, use their income and other entitlements sensibly. The target, and the assumption, do not imply *laissez-faire*: subsidies or asset transfers may be essential to get many ultra-poor households to the target and persuasion to use entitlements rationally, for example through addition to tobacco or alcohol, would be ruled out. But abandonment of the assumption leaves "basic needs" to be selected and weighted, centrally and paternally, by underinformed planners. Better assume that, if people can demand them, they normally will.

Demand affects "basic needs" in two other ways. First, if poor people become more productive, eg. via better health and literacy, will there be too little demand for their extra products? Second, if not, will the prices of essentials (especially foodstuffs) rise so sharply, imperilling "basic needs" and economic growth? The chances of answering "No" to both questions – and keeping the needs programme afloat – are much better if poor people supply and demand their own needs. In more or less self-sufficient economic units, from family farms through villages to nations. This distributive advantage of self-sufficiency – which must be set against the "gains from wider trade" that are the staple claim of economists of all ideologies – underlies Streeten's emphasis on the unimportance of development countries' falling share in world trade; on trade among them, rather than with the developed world; and, at local level, on land reform, though his hope that urban groups may support it "if it promises more food" seems misplaced if the rural poor, having got the land, eat all the extra food themselves.

Suppose the poor can be identified, and the demand problems of a needs policy contained: would a successful needs policy cost too much? Is it really "realistic to aim at eliminating the worst aspects of poverty within a generation"? Rural location of needs measures often cuts the cost per beneficiary. Thus "simple standpipes or wells cost about \$10 per person in rural areas", but "house connections" average \$150 in towns. Waste disposal costs vary from "\$5 per person in rural areas [to] \$15–200 in towns". While urban medical spending per person far exceeds rural, Third World rural death-rates are well above urban ones; a few developing countries (and aid agencies), have shifted funds from urban teaching hospitals to

more rural dispersion raises cost-per-person – as in some forms of education and health – the effect is offset by the lower unit cost of construction, if rural buildings are put up labour-intensively in the slack season.

Costs of meeting "basic needs" may often remain high – especially relative to the resources of the poorest countries, and to the political will of their elites. To reduce such costs, "first things first" needs to be transformed into an economically efficient version of the biblical "unto this last" that so influenced Ruskin and, through him, Gandhi. It is the poorest 10–15 per cent, not a blanket and hopeless 50–70 per cent, who are faced with medically threatening undernutrition. Yet they are seldom helped by the big projects of governments and aid donors, even by "poverty-oriented" projects that reach the moderately poor. How can one cost-effectively get "unto this last"? Translated into *anydayday*, it has meant in India village meetings to identify the five to ten very poorest households – followed by supervised lending to help them to buy and manage productive assets: a few goats, a few carpenters' tools, at most simple fishing equipment or a cycle-rickshaw. Such schemes depend heavily on either household consumption or carefully researched, moderately assured markets. They are not forbiddingly costly, or hard to pilot – but are very hard to replicate, or to organize on a large scale.

The problems of definition, demands and cost can be met for carefully selected needs programmes. Is there a conflict with growth? At the extremes, obviously: to maximize, say, life expectancy is to divert outlays from roads and roads. Even away from the extremes, attention to needs involves high current outlays (on primary teachers, rural nurses, even food subsidies) at the cost of investment; it is hard to accept that "there is no evidence that a BN [basic needs] approach is systematically associated with low investment rates".

However, meeting needs can improve investment efficiencies. Many poor countries have achieved major increases in savings and investment, but at the cost of substantially lower returns to such investment. Partly this is because many workers – especially rural workers – lack "basic needs" and are thus too hungry, worm-infested, or under-educated to work effectively with the extra invested equipment, from dams to cotton gins. More outlay on needs probably reduces resources for investment in new equipment, but compensates by raising the returns on both new equipment and old. At the level of individuals and of nations, there is convincing evidence that better health, nutrition, and education are associated not only with greater happiness but with improved economic performance. Most countries, rich and poor, could spend more on needs without significantly impeding growth.

Hence the four problems about the focus on poverty – definition, demand, cost, impact on growth – can be dealt with. Are the objections, then, those of ideology or implementation? No, because even in very poor countries "a wide variety of political regimes [such as South Korea, Sri Lanka, China, Cuba, Yugoslavia] have succeeded in making these changes". Notably, all share "a fairly equitable distribution of physical assets (particularly land)" – and, one might add, a relatively low degree of urban bias.

These books' virtues are not confined to establishing the feasibility of a greater focus on poverty. Streeten shows his usual flair for illuminating the deserts of political rhetoric with the sharp light of philosophical analysis; as when he discusses the "New International Economic Order" to the light of the distinction between three criteria for rules: uniformity, univariability and inflexibility. Just as lucidly he explores the fine distinctions between protecting bad local research, building good local institutions, and maintaining intellectual independence. In a period when development economics is beset by glib caricatures of opposed positions, real and imagined – especially from those masters of caricature, the neo-Marxists – Streeten stands out for his logical subtlety and clarity, and for his respect for the complexities of intellectual history. Such a

Faith and fertility

I. M. Lewis

VERNON REYNOLDS and RALPH TANNER
The Biology of Religion
332pp. Longman. £14.95.
0 582 30021 5

The quest for fertility and prosperity is a major driving force in practical religion everywhere. The authors of this ambitious book take this aspect of religiosity rather literally, treating religions as reproductive strategies designed to promote group survival. They thus, in effect, reverse Marx's famous aphorism: "man makes religion: religion never makes man." For Vernon Reynolds and Ralph Tanner religion is fundamentally about reproduction and even constitutes a "parental investment handbook". The question they thus pose is: "How does membership of a religious group, or belief in a religious faith, affect individuals' chances of survival and their reproductive success?" From this sociobiological standpoint, they argue, religions can be meaningfully graded according to the encouragement (or discouragement) they give to reproductive activity. So Islam, which is very "pro-natalist", defines one end of a religious spectrum embracing Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Roman Catholicism and Protestant Christianity in decreasing order of reproductivity.

Reproductive success, as the authors point out, is crucially affected by health and diet, and hence, if it is to be examined in relation to religious adherence, requires consideration of the impact on general health of different religious practices. Reynolds and Tanner thus proceed to a lengthy comparison of the treatment by the world religions of the different stages in the human life-cycle from birth to death. They then attempt a similar comparative assessment of how these different religions vary in their ideas about illness and health, and in their recognition of and response to disease. Throughout their concern is to establish and calibrate religious differences which have biological consequences and which ultimately affect survival. Not surprisingly, they often seem to find difficulty in deciding whether a particular religious practice promotes or impedes survival. Thus, communal ritual ablations may be seen as promoting hygiene and health or as spreading disease. Mass pilgrimages, likewise, may be construed as increasing or as decreasing the risks of spreading infectious diseases and could, accordingly, be seen as the "outcomes" of pro or anti-reproductive selection.

It will be evident that factors which decrease the chances of the individual's survival once he has been born are here treated – somewhat paradoxically – as "pro-natalist" and survival-positive. In the same vein, religious beliefs which encourage fatalistic acceptance of death are also considered to form part of the same fertility-oriented package. The authors are less certain how to evaluate such "auto-destructive" episodes as the notorious Christian Assembly of God mass suicide in Jonestown (Guyana) or martyrdom, pogroms, and holy wars in general. They do, however, see the last as the product of a switch from pro to anti-natalist values associated with conditions where the subsistence struggle to survive has given place to more relaxed circumstances, with surplus resources. However appropriate this scenario might appear to the contemporary situation of oil-rich Libya, it would hardly seem to accord very well with the expansionist phase of early Islam when the companions of the Prophet laid the foundations for the institutionalization of Muslim holy war.

In common with B. O. Wilson and other sociobiologists, Reynolds and Tanner are primarily interested in the mechanisms by which populations reproduce themselves effectively under different environmental conditions. Religion for them is a method for both ensuring and controlling reproduction – where there is a high level of child-care ("parental investment") high birth-rates are unnecessary and disadvantageous, and hence an "anti-natalist" attitude is appropriate. They spend much time discussing the "anti-natalist" practices of infanticide and abortion, but markedly less time considering the deleterious effects on

(widely practised by adherents of Islam, which they consider the most pro-natalist" world religion). Their somewhat startling conclusion is that, while biologically "perplexing", circumcision, may help to reduce genital diseases. Adaptation is the key concept here, and the underlying assumption, that environmental hazards ("unpredictability") constitute the primary motive force, surfaces towards the end of this rambling book. Here we meet our old friend the ecologically based "over-breeding" hypothesis: "the more unpredictable the total environment is perceived to be, the more people will want to create the support ideas favouring high levels of reproduction Conversely, the less unpredictable the environment is perceived to be, the more people will develop ideas favouring low levels of reproduction." Religion, so the authors claim, provides a "test" of this theory. Abandoning the "tribal" religions, to which glancing and highly selective reference has been made throughout the book (mainly via Tanner), the closing pages concentrate on the five world religions and their purported environmental foundations.

World statistics on national energy consumption and per capita gross national product have been enlisted to assist many strange causes. Here, these are blithely invoked as measures of "perceived" levels of environmental security, with low rates of GNP and energy consumption registering acute environmental insecurity. How many peasant farmers in the Third World, one wonders, know their

national GNP statistics off by heart and what relation do such figures have to actual peasant production and "perceived" insecurity? Unperturbed by such considerations, Reynolds and Tanner tabulate these dubious measures with the 1978 statistics for the distribution by country of the world's religions (curiously omitting a number of countries such as Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and Libya). They thus claim to have demonstrated that "pro-natalist" religions are correlated with low energy consumption and low levels of GNP. Protestant Christianity ranks highest in these two measures and is correspondingly strongly "anti-natalist". Probably wisely in the circumstances, this remarkable development of the Protestant ethic thesis makes no reference to either Weber or Tawney. The correlation claimed between production, energy consumption and positive or negative attitudes to human reproduction would be more convincing if it were established with reference to the world religions in their original environments (rather than where they simply happen to have adherents today). For the argument propounded is strongly deterministic: "these (religious) rules and the actions resulting from them are adaptive in the sense that they are found in countries where the results they produce will tend to enhance the reproductive success of individuals following them." Reynolds and Tanner seem quite oblivious to the fact that the world religions are all of Oriental origin and that Judaism, Christianity and Islam are particularly closely associated historically and geographically.

Celebrations of the couple

Helen Oppenheimer

ANDREW M. GREELEY
Love and Play
215pp. W. H. Allen. £8.95.
0 491 03201 3

ERIC FUCHS
Sexual Desire and Love: Origins and history of the Christian ethic of sexuality and marriage
Translated by Marsha Dalgie
294pp. Cambridge: James Clarke. Paperback, £9.95.
0 227 67876 1

MARGARET HEBBLETHWAITE
Motherhood and God
147pp. Chapman. Paperback, £3.95.
0 225 66384 8

Andrew M. Greeley is a Roman Catholic priest who has written many books. The blurb of *Love and Play* calls him "a controversial thinker" and promises that "puritans may be shocked". Father Greeley himself thinks that "for most Catholic Christians it comes as a rude shock to be told that sex is a celebration". In fact, people looking for shock will be disappointed. This book is making one simple, important Christian point. The priest is large, the style readable, the enthusiasm undiminished. The author's originality lies in firmly attaching the delightfulness of play, not to transient relationships, but to deep-rooted ones: Do children play with "strangers, casual acquaintances, people they don't care about"? So he turns the tables on the hedonist. The real playmate is someone we know and trust.

Yet something is "disconcerting": the fact that this appreciative account of marriage is written by "a committed celibate Catholic priest". Father Greeley warns us to take this book with what he has written elsewhere, not expect him to "say everything at once, qualify every phrase, footnote every sentence". Yet still one needs on the spot some indication of the point of celibacy, to set alongside his warm understanding of what it is like to be married.

Eric Fuchs is a Swiss Protestant pastor and his *Sexual Desire and Love* is weightier, more decorous and more complex than Greeley's book. Except for its beguiling red title on the cover, it makes no claim to shock. Yet this author, too, addresses himself in Christian loyalty to the problem of why the Christian Church finds it so hard to enter into its positive heritage. The strength of this book is its

Pastor Fuchs's starting-point, firmly though not uncritically posited, is the Word of God. To justify this starting-point would require another book: here it is fair to give him the chance to "demonstrate his relevance", to build a sexual ethic upon which is both Christian and humane. His basis is the beginning of Genesis: not primarily sin, nor primarily procreation, but "Man and Woman in the Image of God". Sexual differentiation and relationship are more fundamental than the promise of fruitfulness.

To this positive doctrine the teaching of Jesus returns, conferring primary authority on the Gospels texts. What matters is the couple. Sexuality is "a gift from the Creator"; law is secondary, a response to evil, "not, as such, the expression of God's creative will".

Subsequent history is in some ways a sorry tale, but Fuchs tells it with fair-mindedness. The distortions "are not due to the evil intentions or the imbecility" of our ancestors. Even a little special pleading is a good corrective to easy liberal blame for people with other terms of reference than ours. How could a first-century man be expected to break away from the prejudice that women ought to be submissive? St Paul had "a concrete approach". Even St Augustine had insights as well as fatal limitations. The point is stressed that Christianity has wrestled with these themes just because it "valued the richness of the human mystery of sexuality". The book ends with a call that women theologians should now take up the tale "to tell how they enter this battle and what the central theological themes of the acknowledgement of otherness signifies for them".

Margaret Hebblethwaite's book seems to answer nicely to this specification. Of the three books here under review, *Motherhood and God* is the most controversial. It arouses two large prejudices: first, against the self-consciously "Christian family"; and secondly, against the idea of breaking away from tradition to think of God as "she". Mrs Hebblethwaite is the highly articulate and theologically trained wife of the Catholic writer Peter Hebblethwaite. Her book falls into two parts: a frank autobiographical account of her own experience, and some theological reflections thereupon.

At first, one has the impression that this will be yet another portrayal of that mystique of motherhood so satisfying to some and so unhelpful to those outside. It is a sensitive portrayal, in which the author tries hard to be kind to the outsider, but it is still bound to be limited in its appeal. But the theme alters

Their general thesis, which is not argued cogently or clearly, would have been more plausible if it had been shown that the some population changed religious affiliation according to changes in the environment. It would have helped too if, in addition to the ritual gestures made in this direction, the authors had distinguished clearly and consistently between religious theory and practice, instead of reifying religion and producing a set of sometimes ludicrous caricatures. Another problem in their discussion of adaptive fitness and reproductive success is the authors' disconcerting habit of slipping backwards and forwards between different levels – from the individual, to the group, to the country, to the religion. Confusion between effects and causes, commonplace in works of this type, is here pervasive.

More generally, and leaving aside the complex interplay between religion and reproduction which this book does little to elucidate, it seems likely that high levels of environmental stress may ultimately discourage rather than promote fertility. This, of course, is what some of the authors' discussion of infanticide amongst the Eskimos and in other equally stark environmental conditions suggests. Conversely, favourable environments may encourage an increased birth-rate. There is, obviously, an enormous range of factors (including the availability of effective contraceptives) involved here – too many and too complex to be adequately captured in the framework Reynolds and Tanner deploy in this book.

intricate difficulty which is emphasized. "Patience and self-sacrifice" are *not* the image of perfect mother-love, but can be a trap to destroy the relationship between mother and child. The "ideology of a child's need for security" can distort. Mothers are victimized by a theory which uses their natural instincts to load them with blame. The very normality of the crisis makes it serious: "the demands of perfectly healthy small children, and your own at that" present themselves as unmanageable. One sees now why the success story of birth and nurture had to be told first to put this important plea for understanding into context. The Christian family "comes into its own when success and crisis and the overcoming of crisis are set in relation."

Does the theology of the motherhood of God follow? Mrs Hebblethwaite calls God "she" throughout, though affirming that she can say "he" in church or pray "Our Father" with no sense of discordance. To counteract the overwhelming impression of a male God, this counter-emphasis is attractive. And yet, as she acknowledges, there is "one important person in Christian tradition who does not talk of God as a mother – Jesus himself". Why not?

To counter such a weight of tradition, Mrs Hebblethwaite has surprisingly little to say, except for the fact, much to be respected, that she herself finds her usage sustaining and offers it to others in the hope of encouraging them. But somehow this book touches off reflections which help, contrarily perhaps, to justify Christianity for *not* being more comprehensively welcoming to the analogy of "Mother" for God. Less than half the human race can be mothers: but the intensity of the experience may lead to generalizations potentially unhelpful to everyone else. When Christ came, he came not as mother but as child, which we have all been, and hallowed the relationship the other way round. For many Christians his mother has become a key figure in their faith.

The role of motherhood, unlike parenthood, has something fundamentally finite about it. In every motherhood is characteristically a series of separations: birth, weaning, sending into the world. The dreadful separations Mrs Hebblethwaite makes herself and her readers look at in her Chapter Eleven are a kind of monstrous caricature of motherhood. Each natural separation is in order to give life to a more mature and more satisfying relationship, and a Christian hopes that this will be true of the eventual separation of death. To seize upon the nurturing stages can give us a kind of interim picture of God's love, but not of its

John Coile

For fear of the bomber

Brian Bond

MALCOLM SMITH
British Air Strategy Between the Wars
360pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £19.50.
0198227671

British air strategy between the wars has suffered badly from the "bloody fool" approach to history. What bloody fools the Air Staff must have been, so the argument runs, to commit the service to a supposedly decisive long-range bombing offensive, only to discover on the eve of war that Bomber Command was totally incapable of fulfilling this strategy. Worse still, the British Government was itself deterred from initiating offensive air operations for fear of Germany's retaliatory capacity. Fortunately, a saviour emerged in the unlikely person of Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, who realized, unlike the dogmatic and unimaginative Air Staff, that defence against air attack was feasible. By giving fighter production priority over bombers in the nick of time (December, 1937), Inskip enabled Britain to survive in the summer of 1940.

As with all seductive myths, there is an element of truth in this interpretation, but Malcolm Smith has performed a worthwhile task in demonstrating that the evolution of air strategy was much more complex. In particular, he shows to what a great extent political considerations influenced both the rate and direction of air rearmament, in some important respects against the well-founded objections of the Air Staff. He also makes clear the serious distortions that have resulted from viewing the whole interwar period in terms of preparation for the Second World War. In the 1920s the RAF precariously retained its independence mainly by exploiting and publicizing its effectiveness in "Imperial policing" in the Middle East and on the North-West frontier of India. Though

Sticking to his guns

Peter Naylor

JON TETSURO SUMIDA (Editor)
The Pollen Papers: The privately circulated printed works of Arthur Hungerford Pollen, 1901-1916
406pp. Allen and Unwin. £20.
01049421824

Arthur Joseph Hungerford Pollen was born in 1866 and died in 1937. He read history at Oxford and went on to read for the Bar at Lincoln's Inn. He became a critic for the *Westminster Gazette*, a private tutor with a taste for big-game hunting and then, after his marriage, a successful businessman, managing the Linotype Company. Until his middle thirties, he fitted well, but not remarkably, into an expansive and energetic society that produced many other bustling and accomplished figures.

But, in 1900, after viewing a practice firing on a visit to the Mediterranean Fleet, Pollen became interested in the problems of aiming naval artillery, and this selection from his private papers, edited for the Navy Records Society by Jon Sumida, outlines what developed into a major part of his life's work and a protracted, unsuccessful, and often bitter, struggle to persuade the Admiralty to adopt his ideas and the equipment which he devised to implement them.

The nub of the problem was this. The naval guns developed by the turn of the century, whether of medium or large calibre, were capable of firing with much improved accuracy over much longer ranges than had previously been possible (or, indeed, were actually used in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5). In order to make full use of these new potentialities, ships would need new techniques: accurate range-finding, a method of predicting where the target would actually be when the shell arrived after a relatively long period of flight, and a system for calculating precisely the relative positions of swiftly moving firing-points and targets. In addition, accurate observation of the results of bombardment, and a continuous system of checking, correcting and

there was some speculation about air strategy against a major power no substantial bomber force was created and of course the Luftwaffe did not yet exist as a potential enemy. Even in the early 1930s the British Government was far more concerned with air disarmament than with preparing the RAF for war.

British Air Strategy Between the Wars, which embodies the virtues and limitations of a doctoral thesis, is particularly clear and convincing in reappraising the operational concepts of Sir Hugh Trenchard and in showing how RAF doctrine was influenced by the limited experience of the First World War. Most theorists emphasized the vulnerability of the civil population to bombing, and this notion was reinforced by the social turmoil of the post-war years. Societies already riven by class conflict were assumed to be increasingly vulnerable to air attack, against which governments and armed forces would be helpless. Lurid reporting of the air warfare in Spain and China excited fears of instant, catastrophic bombing.

Contrary to legend, Trenchard as Chief of the Air Staff in the 1920s is shown to have held surprisingly moderate views about the proper role of air power. He believed it should neither be independent of the other services nor a mere auxiliary to them, but should be employed flexibly as part of an integrated war plan for all three services. He did, however, bequeath two articles of faith which bedevilled air theory in the 1930s; namely, the ability of bombing to shatter civilian morale, and the feasibility of a direct attack on the enemy's home front without first defeating his air force to gain command of the air. British air exercises in the early 1930s were deliberately biased to suggest that Trenchard was right and that, in Baldwin's famous phrase, "the bomber will always get through".

When the first cautious steps towards rearmament were taken from 1934 onwards, the RAF was given priority in financial allocation

considerable effects upon the course of battle and the lethality of naval warfare. These requirements became more pronounced as the trend towards faster, all-big-gun battleships was sharply accelerated by the decision to build Dreadnought; here, it seemed, was an open declaration of an intent to use the new artillery technology to its full potential. But Pollen's experience was to show that the Navy, as an institution, was very slow to acknowledge that fundamental changes would be required.

Pollen was by no means the first person to perceive the need for a system of fire-control based on scientific principles; what marked him out was that he was the first "outsider" to interest himself—a civilian, an amateur, a man with a commercial as well as an intellectual interest in the outcome, and a society figure with a range of contacts which enabled him to lobby as well as to use the "normal channels". These were not merely distinguishing characteristics; they were among the reasons for his failure to persuade the Admiralty to adopt his equipment. His ideas became fully developed before he could devise fully reliable control systems, and the partial failures that occurred in rather badly arranged trials were accepted as a justification for the rejection of his proposals. The surreptitious use which the Navy nevertheless made of some of his concepts and instruments was finally acknowledged by an award from the Royal Commission on Awards to Inventors in October 1925.

The Pollen Papers outlines, with good explanatory material from the editor, how Pollen developed his ideas and fought his case. But its purpose is a specialist one: the more general aspects of Pollen's struggles were covered in *The Great Gunners Scandal* published by his son, Anthony Pollen, in 1980. This is a less objective but more colourful account, and it highlights rather more easily for the general reader what a messy place the post-Victorian Navy was. The Admiralty's dealings with Pollen reflect no credit on the Service; it was long on prejudice, high on pride, short on organization, faults which had a much wider effect than the Pollen Papers reveal: the Great War was only the first stage in the long and painful

transformations mainly because the Luftwaffe now gave a definite shape to the general obsession with aerial attack, but also because this form of expenditure was considered more acceptable to public opinion. Trenchard's notion of a flexible air doctrine, though still advanced by influential officers such as John Slessor, was gradually displaced by the concept of deterrence through an independent bombing strategy, which in the mid-1930s could only have been carried out from Continental bases. Arthur Harris, already a champion of this strategy, used it to counter the claims to air support from the other services: "for Harris, the Admiralty needed to be deterred as much as Adolf Hitler."

From 1935 onwards, Britain's priorities in rearming were decisively influenced by the alarming intelligence estimates of the present and projected growth of the Luftwaffe, exacerbated by Churchill's assertions that the real imbalance was even worse than the official figures allowed. The British response was a series of production schemes designed to secure "parity" with Germany. Smith convincingly defends the Air Staff's unenthusiastic reactions to political prodding. Since "parity" was interpreted in simple terms of numerical equality, diplomatic needs demanded the immediate production of as many aircraft as possible, irrespective of obsolescence and other drawbacks. Thus more than 3,000 Fairey Battles were produced by December 1940 although they were known to be obsolete. The Air Staff would have preferred to rearm more slowly, if necessary sacrificing numbers in the search for a technological lead in new types of bomber. But there were other, justified fears about the lack of reserves and adequate training.

By the end of 1936 the quest for parity threatened to unbalance the whole rearmament programme: it had not achieved the immediate objective of a diplomatic breakthrough; its enormous cost was inimical to the RAF's needs for a balanced force—quite apart from its harmful effects on the other services; and it was doubtful if the factories could produce enough aircraft on schedule. It was this impending crisis which led Inskip, acting on the Treasury's need to impose a ceiling on defence spending, to reverse the ratio of bomber to fighter production in favour of the latter. Faster fighters and the newly developed radar enhanced the prospects of a successful defence against bombers. Inskip's measures implied a drastic change of strategy in anticipation of a

Lethargy in the ranks

Philip Towle

HEW STRACHAN
Wellington's Legacy: The reform of the British Army 1830-54
302pp. Manchester University Press. £27.
0719009944

The Crimean War exposed the miserable state of the logistics, command and training of the British army. The conflict jerked it out of the lethargy which had developed since the battle of Waterloo, and ushered in an era of military reforms. At least that is the generally accepted view, but one which Hew Strachan sets out to modify if not to overturn. He believes that recent historians have been too deeply influenced by the reports from *The Times's* correspondent in the Crimea, William Howard Russell, who was excessively critical of the army and especially of its commanders. He also argues that in later years progressive officers found it tactically useful to hold up alleged shortcomings in the Crimea as examples to the public of what could happen if their proposals for reform were ignored.

Dr Strachan shows that the military press before 1854 was frequently a staunch advocate of reform, that some officers were reformers and that their efforts did have an impact in certain areas. Barrack accommodation for the troops was improved, savings banks were established to discourage soldiers from spending all their money on alcohol and punishments were also reduced—there were 879 sentences

two-phase war. In the first phase a German onslaught on Britain would be checked and only in the second would offensive bombing occur as part of an attritional strategy against the German economy.

Smith challenges the fashionable view that Inskip's timely alteration of the RAF's priorities made him the real hero of the Battle of Britain. In reality Inskip did little more than confirm the only strategy available in 1937 without appreciating the tremendous efforts which Dowding and his staff at Fighter Command would have to make to defeat the Luftwaffe in 1940. It was, moreover, a gamble to assume that fighters could successfully thwart a bombing offensive: "a gamble justified neither by the contemporary state of readiness of Fighter Command, nor by estimates of German strength and strike capacity". Fortunately Air Staff estimates of the Luftwaffe's size and capability for independent bombing were greatly exaggerated; errors which deserve more critical analysis than they receive here. Smith also passes too lightly over Inskip's assumption that Britain possessed the economic strength to take on Germany in a long war.

When war came in 1939 the Air Ministry was in the embarrassing position of having no plan to implement relevant to the international situation, even if the political restraints on bombing were lifted. This was the melancholy consequence of inter-service competition for finance and production facilities; popular and political obsession with air attack; and the ill-thought-out pursuit of deterrence based on the illusory notion of parity.

Four main conclusions emerge from this dispassionate, well-documented study. First, the complex infrastructure of modern industrial societies made them far less vulnerable to disintegration from bombing than the air theorists imagined. Second, the offensive bombing strategy was far too terrible in its implications to be a credible instrument of policy for a democracy such as Britain in the 1930s. Third, though understandable as a reaction against the older services' hostility in the 1920s, air propaganda emphasizing the decisive role of an independent RAF greatly impeded a rational distribution of inadequate resources for national defence. Finally, the Air Staff's unwillingness to accept that effective bombing was impossible without first obtaining command of the air over the target area meant that Bomber Command was forced to learn from bitter experience in the early years of the Second World War.

elined, while officer education at Sandhurst and Woolwich improved even if it was too theoretical. Standards of marksmanship began to rise, particularly after the school of marksmanship was opened at Hythe in 1853, and a beginning was made in assembling large numbers of troops so that manoeuvres could be held.

Yet very often the reforms were too half-hearted and too late and the consequences were visible—as Russell and others pointed out—in the Crimea. Strachan ascribes the inertia mainly to the army's imperial role and to the influence of the Duke of Wellington and those who thought like him. Imperial tasks meant that the small army was scattered across the world, that the soldiers were often debilitated by long periods spent in the tropics, and that the necessary attention was not devoted to what a war in Europe would demand of officers and men. The Duke of Wellington opposed reforms not just because of senility or conservatism but because he felt that the army would only be safe if it were, so far as possible, removed from the public gaze.

Hew Strachan has not then succeeded in totally overturning the traditional picture of the pre-1854 army. What he has done is to show that there were many people, inside the army and outside, who saw some of the changes which needed to be made, even if they could not always convince those in power. The only major omission from his history is an examination of the army's weapons and of the Royal Arsenal which produced them. Nevertheless *Wellington's Legacy* will undoubtedly

Coming inevitably together

C. P. Wormald

H.R. LOYN
The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England
500-1067
222pp. Edward Arnold. £7.95.
0713163763
PETER HUNTER BLAIR
Anglo-Saxon Northumbria
Edited by M. Lapidge and P. Hunter Blair
338pp. Variorum Reprints. £26.
0860781410

The historiography of Anglo-Saxon England is almost as extraordinary as its history. The historical paradox rests upon two apparently inescapable facts. On the one hand, no other Western diocese of the Roman empire broke so obviously from its Roman past as Britannia: linguistically the Latin legacy was marginal in Welsh and negligible in English; and when, in 597 AD, a papal mission arrived in Kent with the doubly unfamiliar message that the Kingdom of God was open to slave and warrior alike, and that the innumerable kingdoms then occupying Britain did, or at any rate should, constitute one *regnum Anglorum*, the Roman dioceses of Gaul and Spain were already, in effect, united barbarian hegemonies. On the other hand, what Pope Gregory wrongly assumed to be true of Britain in 597 had become true by 1066, in ways that it had not been, or was no longer, true of Gaul and Spain: there was a "kingdom of the English" for William to conquer, which roughly corresponded in size and institutional structure to modern England, and which, give or take various parts of the Celtic fringe, bore a distinct resemblance, in shape if not culture, to Roman Britain. How was this to be explained?

One once-fashionable solution now staging something of a come-back is that the Romans

left behind more than ruins and the odd loan-word: there is direct continuity, in social structure and in political horizons, between Britannia and "England". Another approach, for long much more acceptable but now in general retreat, was to play down the Anglo-Saxon achievement: bonds of unified government existed in 1066, but they badly needed tightening up by Norman "dynamism" (not to mention "feudalism"). But the commonest reaction is reluctance to recognize that the problem exists: the making of England was somehow inevitable.

H.R. Loyn's is the first full-length study of the origins of English government for nearly eighty years. He is now the doyen of Anglo-Saxon historians. This book has his familiar qualities of lucidity, common sense, awareness of recent research and a tolerance of differing views notably absent in other surveys of early English "governance". Special features are his insistence that this long period was one of institutional change, normally gradual but sometimes dramatic, and his attention to contemporary theories of government in their Continental context. One's reservations relate not to the factual slips that can be corrected in the further editions which will surely be demanded (was Durham really "an important administrative centre in the 650s"?), but to the dominance of established traditions in the subject.

One is Loyn's remorseless "evolutionism". We hear constantly of "progress", "advance" and "contribution", of increasing "rationality" and decreasing "brutality"; the growth of English government was not only inevitable but a jolly good thing. A second is his ingrained caution. He claims to favour the "tip-of-the-iceberg" school of Anglo-Saxon historians, willing to recognize the immense possibilities beneath our fragments of evidence; but he keeps a wary eye on his iceberg. New propositions tend to be advanced with such formulas

Well off and ill done by

Benedicta Ward

ANGELA M. LUCAS
Women in the Middle Ages: Religion, marriage and letters
215pp. Brighton: Harvester. £18.95.
0710803486
DIANE BORNSTEIN
The Lady in the Tower: Medieval courtesy literature for women
125pp. Hamden, Conn: Archon. \$15.
0208019952

The position of women in society in the Middle Ages has been relentlessly pursued for some time now, usually through the distorting glass of contemporary interest in the changing role of women in society. Angela M. Lucas's *Women in the Middle Ages* and *The Lady in the Tower* by Diane Bornstein are by no means free from this negative approach which places "unfair to women" over material that belongs to quite other interests and concerns. Both books survey the period from about 500 to 1500 AD and both concentrate on Northern Europe. Mrs Lucas limits her field by looking mainly at English women in this period as seen in relation to religion, to marriage and to their own writings; Dr Bornstein concentrates on books which commented on or gave advice about the behaviour of women. Both have provided notes, select bibliographies and indexes.

Women in the Middle Ages is an ambitious title; to discuss half of the human race for a thousand years even; under the three topics Lucas has chosen is too much for the 187 pages involved. It is not a definitive study, but inevitably selective. For instance, the poor, men as well as women, remain virtually invisible in literary and in official records, and it would need quite different material to give them any place in historical discussion. English women of the upper class are chosen for the most part, and even there the extent of the topic entails omissions and obscurities. For instance, in the first and weakest part of the book, the views of Philip the Jew are quoted with such haste that the impression is given that he was a Christian writer; clarification of this point could have

influence of Jewish thought upon the formation of theology in the early Church and made clear the high opinion held by the Fathers of women, in distinction from their pagan antecedents and contemporaries.

The second section of the book is its strongest part, and here Lucas presents an excellent analysis of the interweaving of Anglo-Saxon law with church law on marriage and the difference made by the intrusion of the Normans. The third section, however, is curiously thin, in an area where vernacular literature provided wider scope than ever before for the writings of women. Brief considerations of women writers who were not English, such as Hildegard of Bingen, Elizabeth of Schonau and the great ladies of Heilfta, do not make up for the virtual omission (but for two sentences) of Julian of Norwich, one of the most profound of Christian theologians and of infinitely more interest than Margery Kemp with whom she is here classed.

The Lady in the Tower provides an introduction to the courtesy books of the period and illuminates this little-known source concerned with the ideals presented to and for women. It is a book of description rather than analysis, but as such presents material of great interest. Since the study is not confined to books of etiquette but includes other kinds of literature, a surprising omission is the letters of Héloïse and Abelard with their views on women and the role of the sexes: Héloïse, as mistress, wife and nun, as well as notable scholar, would have provided a useful link between the literary genre and the realities of life for at least one woman. There is one excellence in this book which outweighs any shortcomings: each chapter ends with extensive quotation from that admirable writer of the thirteenth century, Christina de Pisan. Well educated by her father, married happily at fifteen and widowed at twenty-five, with her mother and three children to support, Christina became a professional writer. Her *Clé des Dames* is a model of sane and shrewd comment on women by a woman.

These are two books of value for the historical and literary evidence they use as well as for the intrinsic interest they have for the general

as "we may well have been wrong to . . .", and his hesitancy when confronted with complex problems like the Anglo-Saxon "chancery" is obvious. In short, proliferation of sound evidence is equated with developing unity, reason and efficiency.

To mention three of several considerations that give pause to one's optimism: in 1018, Cnut raised a *geld* of £72,000, plus £10,500 from London alone; is there any evidence that a single land-tax produced so massive a sum for centuries thereafter? Did spiralling bureaucracy (ie, evidence) mean increased efficiency? Second, it seems that later Anglo-Saxon justice made solemn use of the ordeal, invoking the imminent justice of God upon malefactors whom kings swore to extirpate at their coronations. Though undoubtedly efficient, can we call such justice more rational or less brutal? Finally, compare the powers of Offa of Mercia (757-96) and Egbert of Wessex (802-39). Egbert was not a different kind of overlord than Offa: he did expel the Merians and East Saxon kings. The differences were, first, that Egbert's hegemony was less, not more, permanent, lasting one year, not ten to fifteen; and, second, that because Egbert's dynasty eventually triumphed when its Viking enemy knocked out its English rivals, we have sources sympathetic to his efforts but not to Offa's. Would an Aquitanian or a Bavarian have seen inevitability and profit in the rise of French or German monarchies? Why should the Northumbrians in England?

The point has some bearing on Peter Hunter Blair's book, a posthumous Variorum reprint

of his papers. Such publications, photographic reproductions of a series of articles complete with their original typesets, pagination, misprints and meaningless cross-references, are often at best convenient. But in this instance we find, with the help of sensitive introductions by his widow and Michael Lapidge, a rare chance to sample the work of a scholar more interested in part, than all, of Anglo-Saxon England. Northumbrian by origin and always, we are told, an exile at Cambridge, Hunter Blair was perhaps too easily dominated by the mighty scholarship of his mentors, Professors Chadwick and Whitelock, and he is best known for worthy textbooks of Anglo-Saxon history. But his most original contributions were these Northumbrian studies.

Especially valuable are his disentanglement of the collection known as the "*Historia Regum* of Symeon of Durham", pioneer work now brought to fruition by Dr Lapidge himself, and his assessment of Northumbrian culture "from Bede to Alcuin", which has also been followed up in renewed respect for Alcuin and his background, and which, despite Lapidge's own reservations, rightly stressed the relative fundamentalism of Bede's attitude to pagan classics. One senses, as he sensed of "Symeon", that Hunter Blair had in mind a *History of Northumbria*. If so, it is a pity that, like that of "Symeon", the project came to nothing—not least because a study of Northumbria in its own right might encourage scholars to ask more searching questions even than Professor Loyn's about the remarkable prodigy that is "England".

Grazia Deledda, young

How funny, she beat him, she
Beat him all through the week
And he knows we know it, and we
Giggle and don't know why
We choke when we learned to speak.

Our fists are balled against
Our treacherous mouths, our small
Handkerchieves screwed up tight.
Why are adresses funny,
Sad people such a fright?

Life is suffening, says
Mama, and Mama is right.
Mama, how does it happen
That laughing has to come when
Weeping might?

A crippled boy would be
A leggy girl's first lover.
What a disgrace she is!
She whistles, shorts, bows over
In agony, not to laugh.

Others have told, with almost
A giggle, stories of trees
That bleed, and girls that are birds
With tongues and without them,
Struggling short of words.

★
Don Sebastiano,
You speak of the not-quite-language
Of donkey, stone and cuckoo.
Stone? we say. But yes, you
Say, stone utters too.

A roll of thunder. Mountains
Lounging like big girls around:
The dreadful horizon. Their
Languid and spiky eyes

Don Sebastiano,
How can I tell you? The hem
Hangs down in front and is
Rucked up behind, and because
They will notice, I hate them.

The unkind, stifled laughter
At cycle-rack and sickbay
And First Communion, is
This what explodes in the peacock,
The ass, the jeering jay?

Does all of the Creation
Deride us? Is it this that
The stone, the cuckoo, the stone-chat
Really intend? There are
So many questions I'd ask you!

A bolder one, that I
Know your answer to
(You'll point to the Madonna):
Is girlhood a condition,
However we act, of dishonour?

Don Sebastiano,
Gravely you point your finger
Up to the heavenly blue.
That means you judge the gym-slips
Horrible surmise true?

No, it is sadder than that:
Girl-geese, the hilly-billy
Goat, the demented ass.
Sometimes it seems the entire
Creation cries "Alas!"

At last I am growing up:
Even our stories giggle,
Our sayings bray their dismay.
We are all of us aching to utter
More than we can say.

DONALD DAVIE

The insecurity problem

George Szamuely

JONATHAN STEELE
World Power: Soviet foreign policy under
Brezhnev and Andropov
287pp. Michael Joseph. £14.95.
07181 22976

Jonathan Steele's *World Power: Soviet foreign policy under Brezhnev and Andropov* is a formidable arsenal of arguments against those in the West who characterize the Soviet Union as a dangerous, expansionist, ideological state determined upon imposing its idea of Communism upon the world. His tone is that of a defence counsel who wishes to persuade us that his client, the Soviet Union, has behaved as any reasonable state in its position would have done.

The mitigating explanations of Soviet conduct that he offers us are, however, flexible enough to be put to use to justify any state action anywhere in the world. The basic argument underlying his vigorous polemic is that the motivating force of Soviet foreign policy is the search for security. There is a restless quest to find peace and stability, and recognition from a hostile world. Steele writes of Eastern Europe:

It is hardly surprising that [Stalin] and his successors created a buffer zone of Soviet dominated allies, designed to absorb the first shock of any enemy ground attack. The horrors of the Nazi occupation confirmed... the view that the only way to deter any future invasion is to maintain a formidable fighting machine... poised, if necessary, to launch a pre-emptive attack on enemy territory.

But, as it turned out, this proved insufficient. "The Western strategy of containment, the post-war American policy of creating forward bases in... countries on the Soviet Union's periphery, and the development of intercontinental rocketry left Moscow vulnerable to a new threat." The Russians are confronted by a dilemma: no matter how far their expansion takes them, they can never abandon their "sense of being encircled". The West is using the Middle East to encircle them, the United

States Mediterranean Fleet has emerged as a "powerful nuclear threat against their industrial heartland"; the Russians are threatened by United States installations in Turkey as well as in the Third World, by Polaris missiles from the Indian Ocean, by the British and French nuclear systems; and now the West's Pershing II and cruise missiles pose so serious a strategic threat as to hold open the possibility of leaving the "entire Soviet retaliatory arsenal intact". In addition, the Russians are not treated with the respect that is their due: "Soviet leaders are sensitive to the insulting language of the Cold War... [angry] at the notion that the Soviet Union is beyond the pale of civilization...". They have had to put up with boycotts, pressure, isolation and contempt. And when, finally, the Americans agreed to engage in détente, the Russians had to put up with their goodwill being manipulated for "short-term gains at their expense".

The rhetorical force of the notion of the Soviet leaders being solely motivated by defensive considerations obscures the fact that any power is bound to attempt to justify its actions in terms of the securing of a vital national interest, of the pre-emptive defensive measures it has been forced to take in anticipation of possible aggression. Consequently, it is often as futile to cite Soviet actions that go beyond the securing of safe frontiers or waters as evidence of some wider global purpose such as "the promotion of world revolution", as it is to interpret these actions as exemplifying the Soviet tendency to respond in advance to remote - yet nevertheless actual - global threats. If one follows Steele and accepts the latter explanation it is not difficult to see what follows.

Since the Russians are threatened by nuclear missiles from just about everywhere in the world are they not fully justified in seeking naval and air facilities to rival and even to exceed those of the United States? And since it is universally acknowledged that they have achieved nuclear parity, why should they not act in accordance with our notion of how a superpower should act? Is it not reasonable

that the Soviet Union should interpret any liberalization in their East European "buffer zone" as threatening their security and consequently take whatever action they feel is necessary to eliminate it, invade Afghanistan in order to keep it "within broadly the same foreign policy position that it had maintained for the past 25 years", or legitimately proclaim for itself the right to engage in a strategic rivalry with the United States? They will challenge Western political and economic influence where feasible and, as Steele concludes in his book, they will neither renounce, nor concede to America, the right to intervene in Third World conflicts.

But if Soviet policy is to aid and bring into its orbit countries acclaimed for their "historical, strategic and symbolic importance in resisting the United States" then it is scarcely comforting for us to be told that ideological considerations play only a small part in Soviet foreign policy making. There is surely a fundamental clash of interests between East and West. The endlessly reiterated objectives of statesmen such as arms control and the peaceful resolution of superpower crises have proved, in practice, to be only too compatible with widely divergent interpretations of intentions. The sterile diplomacy of invective and harangue is an expression of the lack of universal agreement over what properly constitutes a national interest. Therefore, it is rather surprising to find Steele consistently berating the United States for not persevering with détente, for letting down the Russian expectations of a partnership of equals to "encompass the entire foreseeable future".

However, suppose the West were to abandon its "Cold War" attitude and were, finally, to accept that Soviet interests are no more than those of achieving security. The implications of Soviet security requirements would surely preclude the emergence of any kind of consensus necessary for a joint policy. The American nuclear and conventional presence in Western Europe, after all, means that the East European "buffer zone" provides scant security. But would not a Western Europe relying solely

on the British and French nuclear deterrent also be a threat? Even a so-called "Finlandized" Western Europe would be menacing since it would undermine the justification for the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe. It is unclear from his book whether Steele himself thinks that Soviet fears are reasonable and their actions measured responses to genuinely perceived threats.

If Steele's plea to us to see the reasonableness of Soviet needs perhaps leaves us a little unmoved, his bracing words to dispel panic among the pessimists in the West at the imminence of a Soviet takeover of the world, are, however, much more convincing. There are too many constraining elements in the world today for any power, whatever its military capability, to expect the realization of its aims. Why, only recently, Steele tells us, Moscow was forced to abandon the search for naval base facilities in either Mozambique or Angola fearing that the "appearance of Soviet submarines en patrol so close to the Cape route would only have fuelled the alarmist fears of Western bawks about alleged Soviet expansionism". Steele provides us with a detailed catalogue of frustrated Soviet expectations, unachieved goals, newly discovered vulnerabilities, wasted resources: China, Yugoslavia, Egypt, Chile, Iran.

One can hardly avoid concluding that given the Soviet hostility towards the West, of which the lack of freedom of Soviet citizens to travel abroad to form their own conclusions is so significant an expression, and given their lack of ability to legitimize their rule in Eastern Europe either in the eyes of the subject peoples themselves or in the eyes of the West, Soviet insecurity will be with us for some time to come and consequently the conflict of interests with the West will continue. Steele does not allow us to hope otherwise. But then why does he feel it necessary persistently to upbraid United States governments when they attempt to mobilize popular support for what would otherwise be an unacceptably high level of defence spending and for a clearly articulated concept of Western interests?

Neither of these things has actually quite happened but the aims of cultural interchange, improving professional standards and education, and helping Third World countries to benefit from developments elsewhere as well as learning from their experience, have not always seemed paramount.

Whether forcing the exclusion of the Soviet Union will improve matters, either for Soviet dissenters or for WPA, remains a matter for debate. So far as the Soviet authorities are concerned (the psychiatrists have no say in the matter) the pressure is off; the opinion of Western member societies, who have the voting majority in WPA, will carry little weight. On the other hand, the air has been cleared. Some Third World countries find it difficult to understand the logic of excluding one of the largest groups of psychiatrists in the world. India has already made it difficult to hold WPA meetings in that sub-continent. On the other hand, professional standards of conduct have been upheld and asserted and perhaps the Soviet Union may be persuaded by such a country as India that the price of expulsion is not worth paying for a relatively ineffective means of suppressing dissent.

The authors are optimistic. Time will tell whether they are right.

A fourth edition of *A History of Russia* by Nicholas V. Riasanovsky (695pp. Oxford, £19.50, 0 19 503361 2) has recently been published. It has been extensively revised since the 1976 edition. New material covering the last seven years of the Brezhnev régime has been added. New material has been added to sections on the position of women in the Soviet Union, economic problems, foreign policy issues in Eastern Europe, US/USSR arms talks and the decline of détente since Helsinki 1975. The first edition of *A History of Russia* was described in the TLS of May 24, 1963 as "a readable and well-balanced book which has

The dead more alive than the living

T. O. Treadwell

JAMES PURDY
Mourners Below
295pp. Peter Owen. £8.95.
0720606217

James Purdy has always been a coterie writer. His first collection of stories was privately printed in 1956 having first been rejected by every New York publisher to whom Purdy had submitted it, and his reputation was established when he sent copies to various figures in the London literary world, including Edith Sitwell, who seems to have been the first to recognize his talent. Contempt for American cultural values is a persistent theme in Purdy's fiction, while a sense of himself as an outsider and a defiant acceptance of his position as an unpopular writer seems to have freed him from any fear of the experimental or difficult. *Mourners Below*, Purdy's eleventh novel, continues his quest for unusual ways of rendering his vision of American life.

The terrible emptiness and sterility of this life is, as always, his theme. *Mourners Below* is set during the Second World War in an anonymous locality in the Middle West which the narrator refers to only as "our town", suggesting (besides a swipe at Thornton Wilder folkiness) an identification of the place with American society in general. The central character is Duane Bledsoe, the adolescent son of Eugene Bledsoe, one of the town's leading citizens. The novel opens on the day the Bledsoes receive notice that Duane's two older half-

brothers have been killed in battle, their bodies destroyed so completely that only the identity tags and a few scraps of uniform remain.

The elder Bledsoe responds to this catastrophe by refusing to speak of it, or even to allow mention of his dead sons' names, a reaction which Duane finds baffling and intensely painful. As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that the father's iron repression of his grief is an aspect of his emotional deadness, a terrified rejection of human feelings and the natural rhythms of life. "You are afraid of the human body", his ex-wife tells him, "of its birth, its maturation, and certainly its death... You were not meant to deal with the human."

In direct contrast to this is the coarse animal vitality with which Duane's dead half-brothers had been endowed. One of them is se lightly sketched that his presence in the novel is itself mysterious, but the other, Justin, had been a bawling, sweating, rutting giant to whom Duane had looked up with adoration and a marked sense of his own inferiority. Duane's desolation at the loss of all this energy and at his father's cold refusal to mourn for it turns to baffled anguish when the ghosts of his older brothers literally return to haunt him, seemingly to no purpose other than to remind him of his loss.

The third major character is Estelle Dumont, a rich and attractive young widow of equivocal reputation who has been Justin's mistress. In the novel's central episode she organizes a masquerade ball as a memorial to the dead Bledsoes, at which Duane is guest of

Double trouble

Nevin Shack

DOMINI TAYLOR
Gemini
225pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
0241 113229
NATALIE RABBITT
Herbert Rowbarge
216pp. Dent. £7.95.
0450 0462 X

Twins are natural subjects for stories of mystery. Physical resemblance, affinity, inscrutability, a union of kindred spirits, can be made to appear by turns freakish, exclusive and menacing. To another imagination, telepathic contact between twins might easily lead to a conspiracy against the rest of the world.

In both these novels received notions about twins are used to convey an euro - something strange. But this is where they become distinguishable in quality. One bludgeons us constantly with reminders of the strangeness and destructiveness of the twins portrayed; the other achieves its effects through the fineness of its composition, and an ability to tease enigmas out of familiar stuff.

Peter and Pandora, the charmed pair in *Gemini*, have been extremely special since birth. It is said that people almost saw haloes about their heads, and so we can take it that they will miss out on joint sainthood. Instead, a mystical quest for power follows, aided by the bizarre communication channels established between them. Their parents, the encephalic Melissa and worthy Simon, can't really handle things, although spinster-aunt Eleanor proves canny. The prospect of a bad end looms heavily.

Events unravel in such a predictable way that their actual take place seems far less important than all the portentous foreshadowing. Melissa is the grand-daughter of a peer whose estate boasts a Palladian villa, Stierney Court. An American line of the family is set to inherit it - and eventually does - though Lord Dick, "a very Yankee Lord Kendall de Stierney", has not bargained for the machinations of the twins. Several members of the family meet untimely ends as a result of the evil duo's skill at co-ordinating the tactics of murder, always guaranteeing an alibi for themselves.

The whole concoction adds up to a whodunit without any question-marks. The twins' constant plotting, from their time as toddlers to

so well advertise, illuminated escape routes from the *Horse and Hound* milieu, that they hardly tantalize. The problem lies in having a cast of cut-outs surround the precocious pair. Instead of creating suspense out of the unrecognizable, Domini Taylor fails to depict dramatic action in the first degree.

Herbert Rowbarge contains a secret within a secret which is sealed in the cheerless floss of small-town America. The twins, Babe and Louisa, are two ageing spinsters who stir their tea in the same lack-lustre way as they do most other things. They are simply, and very effectively, one personification of domestic tedium split into two. The fact that they are stuck in this chintzy realm means that they can be turned back on the scenario like defences which ansura the stagnation of a backwater in northwestern Ohio.

Eponymous Herbert, their father, is the self-made owner of the Rowbarge Pleasure Dome, an oasis of fun. Despite his business, he is obviously lacking in personable qualities and an appetite for fun, and insists on deceiving even his family about his own origins. These were in an orphanage until he came of age and could find an identity and a fortune for himself. Forever afterwards, only Dick Festeen, his life-long confidant, knows the truth.

Intriguingly, Herbert's shabby, affluence beginnings are not the ultimate secret of the book. He doesn't know that, in fact, he was born one of twins and that his brother was adopted and removed from him soon after they were both abandoned as babies. This unknown detail becomes fatefully important towards the end. Babe and Louisa conspire harmlessly and tirelessly. Herbert, not knowingly a twin because "a vital piece of him was wrenched away" so young, becomes a victim of a mutually destructive conspiracy of a far more extraordinary kind.

Herbert is mercenary in his dealings. Ruby, his rich and plain wife, deceives herself about him before he works his own trickery, and then she dies when the twins are still very young. Ruby is truly hapless and innocent; ever quite a co-sleeping human being, she can't get to grips with womanhood. One of the strengths in the telling of this story is the clear resonance of mood: commonplace occupies every corner. But the modulated narrative gives its study of environment and characters a lasting significance. Natalie Rabbitt, an established children's writer, can build interest up out of apparently insipid, extremely provincial matter; she relishes the privilege of being straight-

honour. In the course of the masquerade she seduces him and subsequently announces her pregnancy, at which point she insists on marrying, not Duane, but his tutor, Duke LaRoche, who has long been hopelessly in love with her; the child, however, is to be given to Duane. A boy is born, Duane takes it from the delivery room, names it Justin Bledsoe II, and devotes himself to it entirely, so much so that in the novel's closing words his father wonders "if there had ever been a boy before in all recorded history who was so destined to do nothing but raise a son".

The dead, the story tells us, are more alive than the living: Duane's own identity is submerged in Justin's, and even in the act of creating life in Estelle Dumont's bed he is, as he comes to see, doing his brother's will. His only purpose is to bring Justin back to life in the form of the child. The masquerade ball, presided over by the Cince-like Estelle (who is identified allusively with America itself), is the novel's master-image. Duane seems to be offered a wide choice of costumes, including that of Pan, but the final choice of an identity

Up the Tullianum

Christopher Hawtree

MICHEL LEVEY
An Affair on the Applan Way
219pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
0241 113156

"Oeh. It was s moan from the workman, an old man I now realised with shame, who was nursing his stomach and staggering against a piece of projecting guttering. 'Ook, yen nasty old cow. And I thought I'd hurt you. Felt sorry, I did.'" Only thirty pages into Michael Levey's second novel it appears that Frankie Hewerd or Kenneth Williams has been brought on to play a part in one of those old comic romps scripted by Talbot Rothwell. *An Affair on the Applan Way*, however, is billed as "part murder mystery, part love story", indeed as something poignant, for behind it "looms the Roman state against which no individual can fight and hope to win".

Who cares who murdered Pontilla Pillata? We are given so little idea of who she was and what she did that we feel merely happy that somebody has been able to escape from this exceedingly odd account of a city which purports to be Rome at the end of the first century AD. None the less, Julia, the Chief Vestal Virgin, is so alarmed and upset by the event that she undertakes a search for the appalling stranger. Not convinced that the man who confessed and died in gaol was guilty, she embarks on her quest in a fashion usually associated with quiet villages, vicarages and libraries:

Tomorrow, I decided, I would go openly to Pontilla Pillata's house and pay my respects as a mourner over

Ex-rectory

Alan Franks

ADAM SHAND KYDD
Happy Trails
192pp. Heinemann. £7.95.
0434 695 035

Adam Shand Kydd is an incipient master at what you might term the still life end of fiction. He does interior to a tee and makes a fair fist of physiognomies. It is in when the rooms are filled and the faces start moving that the trouble starts, even though the trouble itself is of an engaging kind.

Any first novelist who can keep the cutting edge on his sentences as they forge through the increasingly marginally consistency of the plot is to be congratulated; for when first novels founder, they tend to go down with all hands. Shand Kydd's is a story which is at best fanciful and at worst incoherent to the point of unwarranted silliness; and yet as it deteriorates, tunnelling ever more frantically for an escape route, the writing itself grows more taut and strong, as if by way of compensation.

for him is in the hands of others. The masquerade marks Duane's initiation into an adult masculine potency, but on emerging into the real world the next day he is stripped of his expensive costume, benten and sexually humiliated.

The meaning of *Mourners Below* lies on the symbolic, even allegorical level - where spiritual desolation is suggested by houses with too many rooms, and sweat and saliva become the waters of life. The problem with it is nearer the surface. Duane Bledsoe is so charmingly priggish that his ingenuousness is irritating rather than affecting, and the voice which narrates the melodramatic events of his story is a listless, monotone of circumlocution and faded cliché. This may be an appropriately tedious medium for a story about deadness; and it is tempting to see in his technique Purdy facing his role as an unpopular writer in the most direct way. He is, of course, quite entitled to demand that his readers work to get below the arid surface of the novel, but the rewards for making the effort are meagre.

her body; it might be a convenient opportunity to speak to some of the servants.

Variouly assisted, she discovers that, contrary to legend, Pontilla was far from being chaste; her men almost had to work to a rota. By a quarter of the way through, though, so few characters are discernible among the thickets of cloying prose that any detective pleasures disappear. Instead we are presented with people who exclaim such remarks as "I believe I'll now have to stop calling my young friend Gellidus. I asked him - are all Gauls divided into three parts? I'm not sure what I meant, of course, but he blushed very prettily".

It is in such a spirit that Julia forsakes her duty and succumbs to the charms of Rufus. "He stood quite naked, illuminated by no lightning bolt but in a shaft of sun that momentarily burnt his body into chryselephantine teneb." So it goes on for page after page - "the pungent smell of seemed to crush, like garlic, out of the crevices of his trunk made me half-delirious in my greed". The result of it all is obvious; and one final melting moment is interrupted by the arrival of an officer who bears a striking resemblance to Sid James. "I had my orders. And this one's foreign all right - jabbering away he was. If it's a mistake, they must sort it out at the Tullianum. That's where he's going. Come on, lads. Get him moving!" The subsequent tragic ending need not delay us.

Had anybody else written such a preposterous novel, one might have been able to excuse it as an unfortunate aberration. Levey, it will be remembered, was a co-author of the ever-notorious *Fifty Works of English Literature We Could Do Without*, a performance which evaporates all one's charity.

world of rural battiness and elegant decline, in which Josh, plink and corpulent, occupies the old family rectory with his younger more-than-friend Sammy. There is rebid right-wingery at the local Tory association and vile chicanery at golf club committee level. Enter Venetia, Josh's niece, who kicks over traces as John Wayne used to kick over bar stools, with her latest unlovely boyfriend. Boyfriend does a midnight bunk with prized family effects, and a sort of chase is set in motion.

There is nothing like a chase for letting an author loose on some attractive location work: end Shand Kydd fairly zips through the brochure - e button-sized Western Isle, an Italy of comic violence, and best of all, a Notting Hill of flaking stucco and bell-push columns. But if you are going to get yourself (or your narrative) into a scrap, it's no use crying succour from the Patron Saint of Conclusions - only from the strange, powerful logic that can and does rear up from the wreckage of order, in fiction as in life.

At his best Tom Sharpe can conjure that genie at will, and Shand Kydd may yet be able to. If and when he does he will write a pretty

Politicals in the asylum

J. K. Wing

SIDNEY BLOCH and PETER REDDAWAY
Soviet Psychiatric Abuse: The shadow over
World psychiatry
288pp. Gollancz. £10.95.
0575 032537

Seven years ago, Sidney Bloch and Peter Reddaway, published a book summarizing the knowledge available at that time about the way political and religious dissenters in the Soviet Union were not only treated as criminals or traitors but also, in certain cases, regarded as the fittest evidence as insane (TLS, October 14, 1977). They have now brought their account up to date. Much of the information comes, as before, from *samizdat* documents compiled by people who put themselves at risk of imprisonment or further confinement in "special psychiatric hospitals". Some of the more recent "cases" are described and previous estimates of the frequency of the practices are revised upwards.

Some of those who were subjected to compulsory admission because of alleged mental illness, usually schizophrenia, have been allowed to leave the Soviet Union, possibly because of publicity in the West. The accounts of their experiences by Bukovsky, Gorenko, Medvedev and Plyushch, for example, are clear, well-written and convincing. Reputable psychiatrists have seen each of these highly intelligent and articulate men, not one of whom showed any sign of serious mental disorder or disability. Whatever the clinical reasons put forward, such as the undoubtedly loose way in which schizophrenia is diagnosed even in non-political cases, very few informed people in the West doubt that the Soviet psychiatrists involved in such cases are unduly influenced by pressure from the KGB. The authors convincingly documented this point in their earlier book and have little more to add in

should continue to be paid to such matters.

The chief reason for a second volume is to describe the campaign by groups of psychiatrists in the West to have the Soviet Union expelled from the World Psychiatric Association. If the offending practices were not reformed, the account is necessarily based on second-hand reports of what was said at committee meetings in corridors and the informants were not representative of all those taking part. Nevertheless the general outline is probably accurate enough. Led by the Royal College of Psychiatrists, several national associations put down resolutions to be debated at the World Congress in Vienna in July, 1983. When it became clear that there would be a majority of votes in favour of expulsion, the All-Union Association resigned from the World Psychiatric Association, followed by the national organizations of several satellite countries, Poland and Hungary, precariously, remain in the Association.

The details of this long campaign do not make compelling reading but several interesting questions do arise. First, why do the Soviets do it? The answer is theoretically obvious. Health is a social and therefore, particularly in the Soviet Union, a political concept. It follows that "non-health" is also social, if only by exclusion. The borderline between non-health and disease is poorly marked, and especially so in the area of psychological and behavioural problems. The broader and less specific a disease theory, the easier it is to accommodate unconventional or eccentric attitudes and behaviour within it. Soviet psychiatrists tend to apply a very wide definition of schizophrenia, whether or not there is any question of political dissent.

However, much the same was true of American psychiatrists until recently, but accusations of political misuse in the United States have been rare. The differences in political system presumably explain this discrepancy but not the fact that, within the Soviet Union

doubt being raised as to their sanity. Moreover, relatively few psychiatrists are directly involved and the practice does not seem to have spread to other communist countries. There seems a very little reason why it should continue.

Perhaps the practical answer is that, like so many other characteristics of modern Soviet society, it all began under the Tsars and a second revolution would be required to overcome the inertia in the KGB bureaucracy. The psychiatrists who take part presumably have mixed motives. Their diagnostics are vague and non-technical, the rewards are tempting and the pressures pervasive and threatening.

Bloch and Reddaway are right to call the persistence of this practice not just a moral blot but a "shadow over world psychiatry". While it continues in one country, the integrity of psychiatrists and other professional workers elsewhere in the world may be called into question. What, then, to do about it? Making a fuss about individual cases has sometimes helped. Quicker attempts to influence the attitudes of those Soviet psychiatrists with whom Westerners come into contact also have their place. Getting Western political and other leaders to make their Soviet counterparts aware how damaging to their image this practice is, as well as how unnecessary, might be quite effective, but such leaders usually have very different priorities. Changing the Soviet bureaucracy requires more effort than all the labours of Hercules.

The authors think that persuading the World Psychiatric Association to cede one of its member societies is the most effective strategy. The WPA is a loose conglomerate of professional representatives from national psychiatric organizations, which meets every four or five years at an enormous Assembly and between whiles leaves its affairs in the hands of a small Executive Committee and Secretariat. Such an organization is in danger of being run by an oligarchy of office bearers with no vision, who simply wish to avoid trouble and please

John Coile

Building the bomb

Eric Lynn

JAMES W. KUNETKA
Oppenheimer: The years of risk
292pp. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice-Hall.
£13.55.
0136380077

Julius Robert Oppenheimer (1904-67) would probably have remained a professor of theoretical physics, albeit a distinguished one at a major university, but for the intervention of two unconnected events in 1938-39. The first was the discovery in Germany of fission, the splitting of the atomic nucleus accompanied by the release of an extraordinary amount of energy. The second was the outbreak of war in Europe.

Oppenheimer's skill as a theoretical physicist and his knowledge and understanding of the latest scientific developments enabled him to see immediately the practical implications of the new discovery, as well as its scientific significance. In short, it seemed to offer the potential of a new explosive of unprecedented power. This realization, coming close to the outset of a world war launched by Nazi Germany convinced many scientists of the need to create this new weapon, the great fear being that it might not be available for the Western democracies should Germany acquire it.

Oppenheimer was among the leaders in this new research in the United States. At first the work was relatively disorganized and distributed among a number of university laboratories. But Oppenheimer pushed for a more coordinated and centralized effort, and in 1942 was selected to direct the research on weapon

physics and the development of the atom bomb itself at a new secret location in a lonely area of New Mexico - Los Alamos. Here he rapidly evolved from an academic professor in an obscure branch of theoretical science into a new breed of man, the director of a major research and development centre dedicated to creating a highly sophisticated technology. One of the first of that breed, he was also one of the most successful, perhaps of all time, and in three years of amazingly hard and skilled work his team created the atom bombs that brought the Second World War to a close.

Initially, the amazing success of the venture after years of dedicated and brilliant work was exhilarating. But this mood soon gave way to one of profound disquiet about the moral implications of the weapon and its shadow over the future of mankind. Oppenheimer thought deeply about these matters. He was very much in favour of international control of the development of atomic energy, but in the face of Russian intransigence on key elements of the proposed schemes he was driven to concentrate on American policy in this field. In the years following the end of the war and his directorship of Los Alamos his influence was enormous; and as Chairman of the General Advisory Committee of the US Atomic Energy Commission he succeeded in charting a path of balanced technical achievement in spite of the demands of the various arms of the military establishment. Yet it was this very concern to give a firm base to the development of America's nuclear capability that led to his undoing: his opposition to the development of the "super" (hydrogen bomb), on the grounds that it had only a very slim chance of technical success and would absorb too many resources

from the development of the fission bomb, gave rise to the charge that he was concerned for ideological reasons to give Russia a vital lead.

By the end of 1953, the pressure from Oppenheimer's opponents caused the Atomic Energy Commission to suspend his security clearance. Oppenheimer formally protested and as a result a quasi-legal hearing was held. After a preparation of several months and a hearing lasting almost four weeks, the tribunal recommended by a two-to-one majority that his security clearance should be suspended. This was formally and brutally endorsed by General Nichols, the general manager of the AEC, and thereafter an embittered Oppenheimer was no longer allowed to contribute his great knowledge and high mental powers to the service of the state. He remained, however, a notable Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton until his death in 1967.

Despite its title J. W. Kunetka's book cannot be classed as a biography of Oppenheimer. It makes no real attempt to penetrate his character and his personality or to give a rounded view of his private and working life in addition to his official role. It suggests, but does not bring out fully, the interplay between his fascination for the intricate and elegant scientific principles involved in the weapons work and his horror at its implications for the destiny of mankind.

But the book does present a fascinating study of one of the major witch-hunt trials of history. In an objective and almost impassive style, and with well-researched detail, Kunetka builds up the scene of mounting opposition to Oppenheimer from several quarters, some

undoubtedly stemming from personal antagonism, some from military pressure lobbies, some even from scientific groups thwarted by his policy advice in pursuing their own preferred lines of research. He brings out Oppenheimer's basic vulnerability to attack on security grounds because of his association with left-wing causes in pre-war America (an association that was naive and idealistic rather than political, but nonetheless damaging in the McCarthyite atmosphere of 1954), and because of a formal, but harmless, personal security blunder at an early stage of the Manhattan project. Finally, Kunetka draws a detailed picture of the hearing itself, held before three undistinguished time-servers of the establishment, showing the built-in bias of the proceedings in which Oppenheimer and his legal representative were prevented from gaining access to the very documentary evidence needed to establish his defence. Even so, one member of the tribunal felt unable to accept the flimsy grounds on which the recommendation to remove Oppenheimer's security clearance was made. In later years the United States administration became ashamed of the shabby decision and attempted to make amends by awarding Oppenheimer the Enrico Fermi Award for especially meritorious contributions to the development of atomic energy.

Kunetka's book is a valuable contribution to the history of American politics in the McCarthy era. Despite the restrained style a tragic story emerges: the destruction of the public life of a man of great professional talents and broad vision by lesser scientists pursuing their own sectional interests and by officials who were simply unable to see beyond the bureaucratic minutiae of the state.

The great gas-man

David Knight

MARIO MORSELLI
Amedeo Avogadro: A scientific biography
375pp. Dordrecht: Reidel, \$59.50.
90 277 1624 2

The history of science shows a curious pattern of luck and justice. Great discoveries or interpretations are often but by no means always made by those associated with so-called centres of excellence; and those whose names are remembered are sometimes the most eminent of their day, and sometimes more local heroes whose work in one place or in one narrow branch of science has made them somehow memorable. Avogadro is an extreme example of this latter group. Ignored in his lifetime, when giants like Wollaston, Dumas and Wöhler dominated chemistry, his work is now familiar to students of elementary chemistry while theirs is forgotten.

There is further irony in that he is known for his Law or Hypothesis that equal volumes of gases under the same conditions contain equal numbers of molecules. There was nothing new

in this (it was proposed by various contemporaries); what was crucial about Avogadro was his idea that the molecules, atoms or particles of elementary gases like oxygen and hydrogen must be divisible. When we write H₂O for water we are following Avogadro in the belief that oxygen molecules are formed of two atoms, O₂, and are halved during combination with hydrogen. Chemists such as Humphry Davy had come up with this formula, but Avogadro was the first to be consistent and clear about what he was doing.

As Mario Mosselli demonstrates, Avogadro's science was for the most part provincial and old-fashioned, and he made little effort to get his work appreciated. With a legal training appropriate to a member of a family of Piedmontese civil servants, he was not eager to plead his cause in science. His important papers were in French, but he sent them to a journal of the second rank, and he seems to have made little effort to cultivate relations with leading French chemists, or to meet Davy when he visited Italy in 1814. Merely publishing a paper is not enough in science: personal contact and correspondence are vital if ideas are to gain currency, especially if one

lives far from great centres of activity.

Avogadro's crucial paper came out in 1811, though the ideas were amplified in later writings to which Mosselli usefully draws attention. It was to be half a century before Avogadro was to find his champion, and by then he was dead. At the famous Karlsruhe Conference of 1860, called to try to fix atomic weights and therefore chemical formulae and equations (on which there was no general agreement), Cannizzaro urged the importance of Avogadro's hypothesis, and it rapidly met with acceptance. On the surface this seems similar to the history of Mendel's laws of inheritance: the difference is that at least what we think of as Avogadro's hypothesis was known, though not usually attributed to him, and it was used by eminent chemists during this half-century. It was even independently though less clearly proposed by the famous physicist Ampère.

Historians of chemistry since Cannizzaro have therefore been faced with the question of why chemists seemed to prefer to wallow in disorder when all their problems had already been solved - which often happens in life but should not happen in rational activities like chemistry. Mosselli devotes a long chapter to

this, and another to the latter years of the nineteenth century when there was considerable doubt about the real existence of atoms. This unbalances the biography; the crucial point seems to be that in Avogadro's time chemistry and physics were drifting apart and that chemists preferred to rely upon directly chemical evidence, while he was on the "physics" side of the divide.

To have a life of Avogadro is valuable, and this one places him usefully in his context: a task which would have been better achieved if the book had been rather shorter and focused more upon his fate than that of his theory; and also if it had been better edited. Some of the references have not been verified; there is one curious note going on for three pages, "repulsive" chemists are referred to as "repulsive"; and some phrases are tortuous, eg, "the distinction made by Faraday in 1834 had no reason to exist". In the chapters on history of chemistry, it is not disclosed how Cannizzaro came to be invited to deliver the Faraday Lecture in London in 1872, nor why the anti-atomist Edward Diver was President of the Chemical Section of the BAAS in 1902.

The shepherd's bad seeds

John Scarborough

GEOFFREY EATOUGH (Editor and translator)
Fracastoro's Syphilis
295pp. Liverpool: Francis Cairns, £17.50.
0 905205 20 0

Shortly after Columbus's voyage culminated in a spectacular return from the "Indies", there appeared in Europe a new plague, a persistent, fatal disease soon blighted in popular lore on the sexual proclivities of both the natives of the presumed Indies and the unbridled passion of the sailors on the ships dispatched by Ferdinand and Isabella. Once home, it was said, the seaman spread the virulence through their lascivious habits, and after Charles VIII launched his invasion of Italy, the "French pox" was planted on its second European peninsula. Physicians were generally helpless against this new plague and, in a line of reputed

to wreak havoc among Europeans.

Giovanni Fracastoro (c1478-1553) in his *Syphilis or the French Disease* (1530) coined the name we still use today for this sexually transmitted treponematoses. In the classical vehicle of myth, he tells the tale of Syphilis the Shepherd, the first victim of this particularly gruesome affliction. In his Introduction and commentary, Geoffrey Eatough nicely demonstrates that Fracastoro achieved a simultaneously didactic and poetic expression of wonder and horror welded from multifaceted Greco-Roman myths, ancient medicine and its theories of disease, biblical stories, traditional pharmacology and the herb lore from the New World, and the sad state of European politics. Two myths underpin three books of the poem: that of the Holy Wood (Guaiacum), and that of a mercury cure. More satisfying is the presumably mythical description of Guaiacum (Book Three), leading directly into the epic themes of Columbus, the discovered paradise in the West

Atlantis, and the horrors of human sacrifice by Aztecs and Island cannibals.

Apart from the usually excellent Latin hexameters, *Syphilis* ranks as a historical source in its own right. The description of Guaiacum is precise, and Eatough carefully notes Fracastoro's debt to contemporary accounts of the rapidly expanding Spanish empire in America. The text is that established by H. Wynne Finch, whose 1935 edition (with translation) of *Syphilis* has remained standard in English; but Eatough admirably places Fracastoro firmly in the context of the European Renaissance which Wynne-Finch had left assumed. Eatough's translation tends toward literalness, while Wynne-Finch strove for a fluidity sometimes lacking in Fracastoro's Latin. On balance, Eatough's rendition is a better guide for Latinless students of Renaissance epidemiology. The Renaissance savants had many of their classical sources by heart, and Fracastoro knew his Galen very well indeed, as also other au-

thorities on the disease. He also drew inspirationally brilliant insight into epidemiology, which called attention to Greco-Roman ideas of contagion, such as that of the seeds of disease signalled in the opening line of the poem: "Qui casus rerum vari, quae setina morbum inaequum...". Fortunately one may now find a good study of the lengthy history of this notion in Vivian Nutton's fundamental essay, "The Seeds of Disease: Explanation of Contagion and Infection from the Greeks to the Renaissance", *Medical History*, 27 (1983), 1-34. Eatough, moreover, does not make a decision regarding a controversial question of the origins of syphilis, although tending towards the "American thesis". Fracastoro apparently believed that the Americans were the source of the spouge, but perceived as the source of the disease, he too, weakly refused to decide. Eatough has delineated the complicated intertwining of Renaissance scholarship that would influence Fracastoro, but curiously has failed to note

A quick jaunt

Patricia Craig

WILLIAM TREVOR
A Writer's Ireland: Landscape in literature
192pp. Thames and Hudson, £9.50.
0 500 01323 5
ROBERT JOHNSTONE and BILL KIRK
Images of Belfast
174pp. Bclfast: Blackstaff, £12.50.
0 85640 294 X

Following the pattern of most anthologies, William Trevor's *A Writer's Ireland* begins with the impenetrable Ireland of the distant past: apocryphal invasions, invocations, ogham inscriptions. Next comes the era of the regas, with material translated from Middle Irish sources like the *Book of the Dun Cow*. Monastic Ireland, the Viking interlude, the Norman influx and assimilation - all these get a showing, in some literary figuration or other. The reader is whisked through the centuries, with barely a pause for reflection. Anglicization overtakes the national literature. Spenser, Swift and Goldsmith put in an appearance, while the last notes of the final Gaelic outcry die away. "Irrevocable silence ails my heart", claimed the dissident poet Eoghan O'Rahilly, born in 1670 (Eavan Boland's translation, quoted by Trevor).

The hurry from place to place is no less apparent than the dash through history. Trevor has an abundance of striking material to get in. Overpowering landscapes are plentiful, from Yeats's overcast Knocknaree to the Giants' Causeway, whose associations are not predominantly literary. Thackeray's sketch-book supplies comment on the latter. Other Victorian tourists, notably Mr and Mrs S.C. Hall, are enlisted in the effort to establish the pre-eminence of scenic Ireland: woodlands, waterfalls, mountains, round towers, ruined abbeys. Missing from this section is the topographical verse peculiar to the Georgian period in Ireland - an unequivocal instance of landscape in literature, and a form, moreover, that engendered some engaging oddities, such as the Revd Samuel Burdy's "Ardgliss": "On her has Nature liberally bestowed / A bay capacious, and an open road".

Political ballads and the events they commemorate are, by and large, excluded. "At the Siege of Ross did my father fall, / Al Gorey my loving brother all", says the hero of William McBumey's "The Croppy Boy", reminding us that place-names are most deeply embedded in the Irish imagination when they summon up some urgent confrontation of the past, like Trevor's Ireland establishes itself in a series

Benburb or the Boyne. Trevor, though, alludes to Vinegar Hill in his opening page without identifying it as the scene of a famous rebel defeat. "They buried us without shroud or coffin", Seamus Heaney writes in his "Requiem for the Croppies" slaughtered there.

Carleton is mentioned, but not his dramatic use of weather and landscape as a symbolic force; poor Bullock, the Fermanagh novelist, is left out altogether, in spite of his distinctively northern way of viewing the countryside. In Bullock's novels, uplands are Catholic and desolate, lowlands Presbyterian and trim. The wild Aran of Synge and O'Flaherty is here, but not Paadar O'Donnell's Donegal, a fruitful setting for the author's unisistent socialism. We find no reference to the vogue for imposing a simple moral connotation on town and country, which overtook popular Irish writing around the beginning of the present century, and produced a widespread hankering after a home on a hillcock. We do, however, leave the whole of Samuel Ferguson's graceful ballad, "The Foxy Thorn", which exemplifies another Irish instinct: to refrain from scoffing at picturesque taboos.

The Dublin of Flann O'Brien is cited, but we miss his Corca Dorch, the mythical location at the heart of Ireland compounded of all the ills the Gael is heir to: pigs-in-the-kitchen, torpor, wretchedness and rain. Irish melancholy and its evocative offshoots are all-but excluded: no T.C. Irwin ("I walk of grey noons by the old canal"), very little suburban stagnation, and only the briefest glimpse of the country's special twilight, "hull of the suggestion that we connect with death and the ending of earthly vigour". The voice is Synge's, whose plain prose and poetry have the edge on his plaintive outpourings, though perhaps not in the view of William Trevor who praises the dramatist for transcribing a vigorous idiom.

Kavanagh's black hills and MacNeice's linen mills, Joyce's streetwalkers and sinners, "Meath of the pastures" in Padraig Colum's poem about a drover, the remains of great houses dotted sombrely about the countryside: all these contribute pungency to Trevor's unacademic undertaking. It is impossible to disparage his commentary, as far as accuracy and animation are concerned, and futile to complain about the insufficiency of cogent criticism, when the author's intention is to please and entertain. The result is a colourful assembly of places, quotations, observations and photographs; Trevor, at any rate, turns the standard literary excursion into an exhilarating jaunt.

Trevor's Ireland establishes itself in a series

of enticing glimpses, while Robert Johnstone's Belfast is viewed head-on. *Images of Belfast* opens with a lucid account of growing up ordinarily in a Protestant suburb, and goes on to discuss some local cults, both ephemeral and permanent. Among the latter are the odd religions which thrive in the city. Johnstone, born in 1951, remembers the innocent days of Civil Rights agitation, before the reformist impulse took a wrong turning, and applauds the later efforts of the Peace People "to construct a more civilized society, without state or anti-state violence". He offers a selection of anecdotes arising from the prevailing disturbances, but the object of the book is really to direct our attention to the more productive side of Belfast life. Outbreaks of literary activity, for example, along with the other signs of resilience the author enumerates, go some way towards counteracting the common image of a city bent on self-destruction.

Actually, as far as its appearance is concerned, the destruction of Belfast is virtually complete. In this particular area, you can't avoid an impression of bombers and redevelopment working in cahoots to achieve the mutilation of what was largely an unexceptionable city. Ulster philistinism has found an ally in disaffection. Wherever you look, you're reminded of MacNeice's preacher:

Among old iron, cinders, sizzling dumps,
A world castrated, amputated, incrimped,
He walked in the lost acres crying "Repent
For the Kingdom of Death is at hand."

Robert Johnstone notes the rise of interest in local history and community projects, as tangible links with the past become fewer and fewer. Bill Kirk's excellent, but distinctly unglamorous, photographs show the city in its present dismal shape: the security gates, the bleak new department stores, the ruined streets, the signs of municipal blundering everywhere. It requires an effort to give equal weight to the author's and photographer's more inspiring images.

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Benjamin Britten: reminiscences from those present at the first performance of *Peter Grimes* on June 7, 1945, at Sadler's Wells Theatre; for a study of aspects of the arts at the time of the Second World War.

Peter Sianky.
Department of History, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305, USA.

John Kenyon (1784-1856): location of letters, papers, biographical or other information; for an edition of letters between the Brownings (Robert and Elizabeth Barrett) and John Kenyon and a study of their friendship.

Gertrude R. Hudson.
2401 Ridgeview, Austin, Texas 78704, USA.

Lucy Madox-Brown (Mrs W. M. Rossetti) (1843-94) and *Marie Spartali* (Mrs W. J. Stillman) (1844-1927), artists working in connection with the later Pre-Raphaelite circle: information sought for an exhibition and catalogue on the theme of Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists, particularly current whereabouts of any paintings and drawings.

Gail-Nina Anderson.
25 Bayswater Road, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE2 3HR.

Phillip, Lord Noel-Baker: correspondence, reminiscences, etc; for a biography, now in preparation.

J. A. Cross.
Department of Politics, University College, PO Box 78, Cardiff CF1 1XL.

Leonid Pasternak: correspondence, unpublished memoirs or photographs, or information about works not registered with a major museum; for a catalogue raisonné of Pasternak's works.

Lewis Schochick.
Amherst, Massachusetts 01004-1043, USA.

Suffrage Atelier, Artists' Suffrage League, Mary Lowndes: any designs by, or correspondence relating to them and other producing banners, posters and postcards, and organizing processions for the British women's suffrage campaign between 1907 and 1915 (other than in the Museum of London and Fawcett collections); for a commissioned book.

Lisa Tickner.
School of Historical and Related Studies, Middlesex Polytechnic, Colindale Avenue, Hendon, Middlesex HA8 7RN.

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